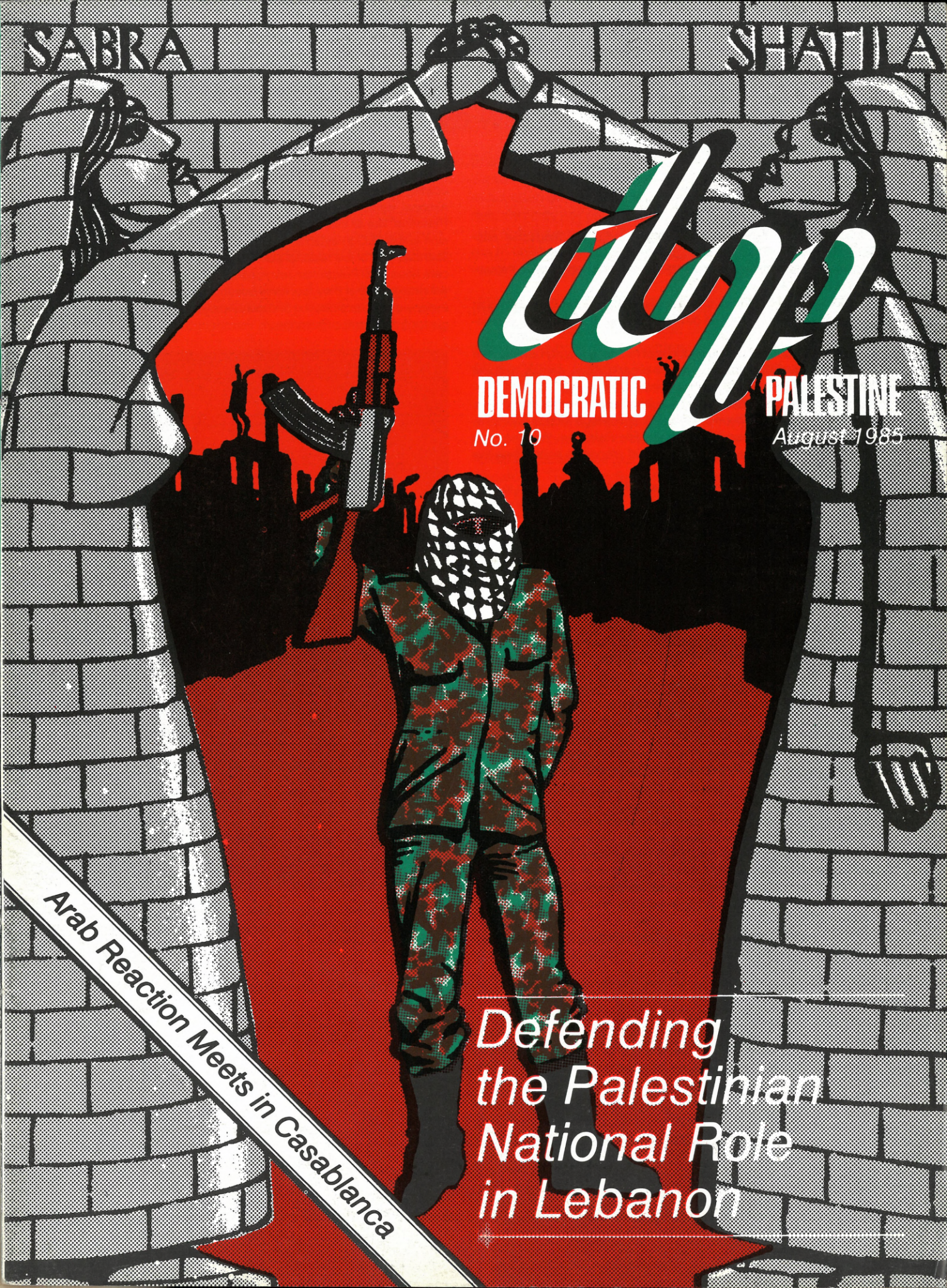

فلسطين الديمقراطية

DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE

No. 10
August 1985

Arab Reaction Meets in Casablanca

Defending the Palestinian National Role in Lebanon

DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE

Democratic Palestine is an English language magazine published by the PFLP with the following aims:
-conveying the political line of the PFLP and other progressive Palestinian and Arab forces;
-providing current information and analysis pertinent to the Palestinian liberation struggle, as well as developments on the Arab and international levels;
-serving as forum for building relations of mutual solidarity between the Palestinian revolution and progressive organizations, parties, national liberation movements and countries around the world.

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The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is a Marxist-Leninist organization and an integral component of the Palestine Liberation Organization. A primary motive for establishing the PFLP was to inject a clear class perspective in the Palestinian national liberation struggle. Experience shows that the most oppressed classes-the workers, peasants, sectors of the petit bourgeoisie, the camp Palestinians-are those most in contradiction with imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction. It is they who carve history with determination that can persevere in a protracted war against the enemy alliance.

The PFLP is deeply committed to the unity and independent, national decision-making of the Palestinian people and their sole legitimate representative, the PLO. To this end, we work for strengthening the role of the Palestinian left, thereby accentuating the PLO's anti-imperialist line in common struggle with the Arab national liberation movement.

The process of liberating Palestine relies on radical, national democratic change or development in one or more of the surrounding Arab countries. This will provide the PLO with a strong base for liberating Palestine. Thus the struggle for a democratic Palestine is linked to the creation of a united, democratic, and ultimately socialist, Arab society. This will provide the objective basis for eradicating the poverty, exploitation, oppression and the problem of minorities, from which the people of the area suffer.

As a cornerstone in this process, the establishment of a democratic, secular state in Palestine will provide a democratic solution for the Jewish question in this area, while simultaneously restoring the national rights of the Palestinian people. After liberation, Jews in Palestine, like all citizens, will enjoy equal rights and duties. The decision of the PLO to establish an independent Palestinian state on any liberated part of the national soil is a step in this direction. It is the sincere hope of all Palestinian revolutionaries that more and more Israelis will recognize that they,too, have become victims of Zionism's racism, expansionism, exploitation and militarism, and will join us in the struggle for a democratic Palestine.

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Editorial

How the Camp War Ended...

The war launched against the Palestinian camps of Beirut on May 19th, by the Amal movement and Lebanese Army 6th Brigade, ended after an agreement between the Amal movement, the Palestine National Salvation Front and the Lebanese National Democratic Front, signed in Damascus on July 17th, in the presence of Syria's Vice-President Khaddam. (See text in following pages.)

An entire book could be written about the war on the camps - about the motives of those who launched it, the suffering inflicted on the Palestinian masses, their steadfastness and the heroism and unity in struggle of the Palestinian fighters defending the camps. We cannot cover all the details of the camp war in these pages. Instead we will highlight some facts that explain why the war ended as it did, why the Damascus agreement was signed and with what conditions.

The survivors of the merciless Israeli siege of West Beirut, and the ensuing Sabra-Shatila massacre of September 1982, were again subject to siege, and consequently diminishing food, water and medical supplies. The month-long siege of 1985 was especially cruel because of the small area upon which it was imposed: the refugee camps of Shatila, Sabra and Bourj al Barajneh where facilities anyway are limited. Those wounded by the incessant bombardment could not be properly treated; disease began to spread, in addition to the fact that Amal forces entered the Gaza Hospital, massacring and arresting patients and medical personnel. Many of the wounded, whose lives might otherwise have been saved, died under these conditions, and people had to find ways to bury them. The necessity of mass burials was one indication of how quickly conditions became intolerable. One of these occurred two weeks after the siege began. Families gathered in Shatila's cemetery to identify their dead, despite continued sniping into the cemetery by the attackers. Eighty-three persons were buried that day alone, in two mass graves. At the time the war ended, over two hundred injured were trapped at Shatila and Bourj al Barajneh, the attackers having totally prevented ambulances from entering Shatila. Only very limited evacuation of wounded had been allowed from Bourj al Barajneh. Seventy per cent of the houses were destroyed in Shatila and Sabra where the attacking forces had brought in bulldozers to finish where their shelling left off. There was considerable damage in Bourj al Barajneh as well.

Palestinian unity in struggle

Despite all this, the people of the camps had remained steadfast, encouraged by fighters' bravery and unity in defending the camps. This was the key to thwarting the ultimate aims of the attacking forces. The Amal movement and their supporters had expected a limited operation and quick victory. They wagered that the prevailing division in the ranks of the PLO would give credibility to their false claim that Arafat had provoked the battle, and that they were only attacking «right-wing deviators». The people of the camps knew this claim to be false. Moreover, they rejected in principle such a pretext for armed assault on the camps. The fighters of all organizations present in the camps joined in the defense. Their position was reinforced by the PNSF leadership which made clear that Amal and the Lebanese Army's 6th Brigade were attacking the camps as a whole, to eliminate them and end the Palestinians' militant national role in Lebanon. The PNSF moreover pledged to fight to the utmost to defend the camps and preserve Palestinian rights to bear arms for continuing the liberation struggle. On the basis of a clear political stand and unity, Palestinian fighters fought valiantly. Young men and women volunteered for special operations of certain suicidal consequences, to relieve the siege. Aided by «unknown soldiers» from Lebanese nationalist ranks, special operations were mounted to hit the attackers from the rear.

Problems in the attackers' ranks

The result was setbacks and demoralization in Amal's ranks. This was revealed in many incidents, including the movement's execution of a number of its own military cadres - perhaps they had expressed doubts about this campaign; perhaps they were held responsible for failure to overrun the camps in a few days. Amal also had to bring reinforcements from the South. This turned out to be a unit of «retrained» deserters from Lahad's renegade South Lebanese Army.

Moreover, the attack on the camps created friction between Amal and other Lebanese nationalist forces. People who were in West Beirut at the time report that there was widespread criticism of Amal's actions among the Lebanese population at large, including portions of the Shiite community. The prolonged defense of the camps had its effect on the Arab level. Those who had backed Amal's assault on the pretext of fighting Arafat, were left without cover, because the PNSF, known for opposition to the right-wing policy, took a clear position on the real aims of the camp war. Arab regimes, as well as international allies of the Palestinian and Arab people, urged the end of the war, creating added pressure. The attackers were forced to realize that their goals could not be achieved by such means.

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The Damascus agreement

The Damascus agreement to end the camp war is a result of all the factors mentioned above. The terms of this agreement are much better than those offerred earlier in the conflict and categorically rejected by the PNSF. (These had included points such as total disarmament of the camps and their being patrolled by the Lebanese Army's 6th Brigade which became a party to the conflict.)

The Palestinian fighters' bravery and the PNSF's correct political decision enforced an agreement whereby Palestinians retained their light weapons in the camps. Heavy arms were to be removed, but when the time came, there were none to mention. This dispelled the myth of the «incredible arms build-up» in the camps, which the attackers had used as a pretext. At the same time, it attested to Palestinian capacities as guerilla fighters. Moreover, the agreement affirmed the right of our people to carry arms in Lebanon, in order to pursue the struggle against the Zionist enemy. Thus the essential aim of the attackers was not conceded to.

Beside having attained better terms in the agreement, the PNSF had a prime motive in signing the Damascus agreement. This was to relieve the miserable situation of our masses, which we outlined in brief above. As such the agreement was welcomed by the inhabitants of the camps.

In short, the Damascus agreement reflected the balance of forces, both the one generally prevailing and the one created in the battle of the camps. It is not such an agreement to which we ultimately aspire. Yet we consider it the best possible in the given circumstances. Its implementation provides a base for repairing breaches in the Palestinian-Lebanese nationalist-Syrian relations, in order to redirect the struggle against the main enemy. ●

Shatila, June 1985.

Identifying the dead in Shatila

Who Attacks the Damascus Agreement and Why?

To refute the Palestinian right-wing's furious attack on the Damascus agreement, PFLP's Deputy General Secretary, Comrade Abu Ali Mustafa, explains the implications of this agreement in relation to the balance of forces and agreements concluded by the PLO in the past.

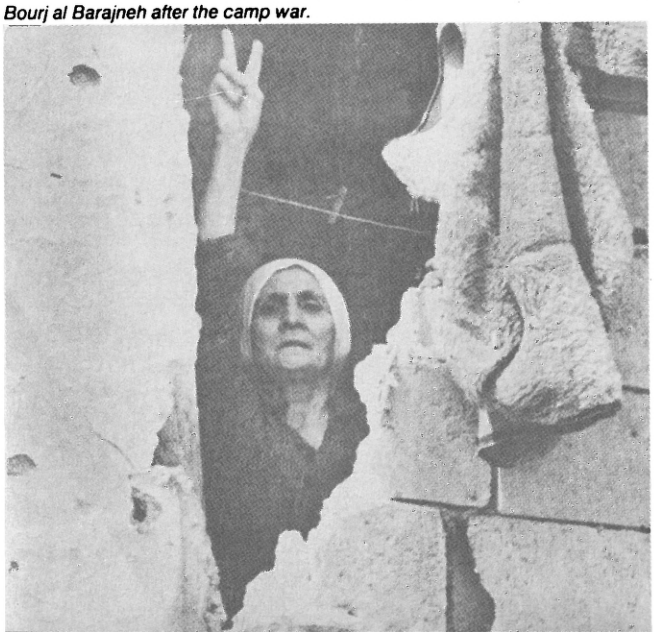
In accordance with their particular political and class backgrounds, several parties have attacked the Damascus agreement which ended the war on the Palestinian camps in Beirut. The most fervent attackers are the deviating rightists in the PLO leadership, who launched a campaign against the agreement and those who signed it, using two main arguments. The first is that the agreement cancelled the Cairo agreement signed in 1969, between the PLO and the Lebanese government, under the auspices of the Arab League. The second is that the Damascus agreement included a point whereby the Palestine National Salvation Front agreed to disarm our people in the Beirut camps. Some are even saying that the PNSF has agreed to disarm our people in all of Lebanon. We answer these lies based on the following facts:

The Damascus agreement improves the Cairo agreement

First, we stress that the Damascus agreement did not cancel the Cairo agreement, either implicitly or explicitly. From the legal point of view, the parties signing the Damascus agreement are not the same as those who signed the Cairo agreement. The Amal movement does not have the same legal prerogatives as the Lebanese government. There has not been any authorization by all Lebanese parties to make the Damascus agreement.

More important is that the Damascus agreement implements the Cairo agreement in a better way, by stressing the right of the Palestinian people to carry arms in Lebanon, to practice armed struggle from Lebanese territory. The Damascus agreement does not put limits on the number of armed people who have the right to be in the camps. On the contrary, it stresses the right of our people to possess arms. It also stresses the need to take into consideration the political, social and civil rights of the Palestinian people, that they should be treated as in other Arab countries.

Bourj al Barajneh after the camp war.



Where were the Cairo agreement's «defenders» at the 16th PNC?

The strange thing is that those attacking the Damascus agreement have just now noticed that the Cairo agreement is being called into question. It is as if they had never heard of the Philip Habib agreement which left nothing of the Cairo agreement except its memory. Even stranger is that these people do not try to remember the last legitimate session of the PNC, the 16th, held in Algiers, in February 1983. All Palestinian organizations and national figures were represented there. At the end of the session, the political declaration was read, including the following well-known paragraphs on Lebanon:

1. Deepening the relations with the Lebanese people and their patriotic forces, and extending full support to these forces in their courageous struggle to resist Zionist occupation and its instruments.

2. Chief among the current tasks of the Palestinian revolution is to struggle jointly with the Lebanese masses and their patriotic and democratic forces to terminate the Zionist occupation.

3. The PNC calls upon the Executive Committee to conduct talks with the Lebanese government concerning the security and safety of the Palestinian citizens living in Lebanon, and insuring their rights of residence, freedom of movement, work, and of social and political activities.

4. Action for ending the arbitrary collective and individual arrests which were carried out on a political basis, and for releasing the Palestinian prisoners detained in the prisons of the Lebanese authorities.

The Cairo agreement, as a basis for organizing Palestinian-Lebanese relations, was completely omitted. We in the PFLP were not satisfied with this omission. Yet the very people who now shed tears over the Cairo agreement, were at that time fully prepared not to adhere to it. This is proven in the third point, specifying what should be negotiated with the Lebanese authorities: The Cairo agreement is not mentioned. Actually, the PNC resolutions could have referred to the Cairo agreement, especially its first four points which state that it has been agreed to organize Palestinian presence in Lebanon on the basis of:

1. The right to residence, work and free movement for Palestinians now living in Lebanon.

2. Palestinians living in the camps can form local committees to preserve their rights in cooperation with the local authorities, in accordance with the Lebanese law.

3. The Palestinian military police shall have stations in the camps, in cooperation with the popular committees, to bring about good relations with the authorities. These stations are ▶

The Damascus Agreement

The Amal movement, the Lebanese National Democratic Front (LNDF) and the Palestine National Salvation Front (PNSF) agree to the following:

1. To reach a cease-fire, to stop violations, to end military presence in the conflict areas, to evacuate the wounded and to pursue humanitarian tasks in the Beirut camps.

2. The Amal forces and the Lebanese Army's Sixth Brigade shall withdraw to their previous positions as prior to the fighting.

3. The Sixth Brigade shall practice the normal duties which it was practicing prior to the latest incidents.

4. All detainees shall be released. Refugees shall return to their homes and camps. They will be enabled to reconstruct their homes, etc.

5. To conduct mass gatherings and reconciliation in order to put an end to the agitated atmosphere caused by the latest incidents.

6. The security of the Beirut camps is a part of Beirut's security. The security committee, which was formed during the Islamic meeting in Damascus, shall put forward one comprehensive security plan for Beirut, including the camps. The PNSF shall be consulted on this plan. The Internal Security Forces shall be the instrument for security in the camps. These forces shall open stations in each of the camps.

7. At the time when the various Lebanese factions agree to a plan or plans of security for greater Beirut or other Lebanese areas; or when the national unity government puts forward a plan or plans of security, the Palestinian camps shall be dealt with accordingly, similar to the Lebanese areas. Any decisions or measures taken concerning the Lebanese shall be applied to the Palestinians.

8. Until a comprehensive or partial gathering of arms in Lebanon, in accordance with security plans agreed on by the different Lebanese factions, or decided by the national unity government, heavy and medium weapons shall be put outside the camps of Beirut under the supervision of the joint coordination committee.

9. The joint coordination committee shall be composed of two representatives from the Amal movement, the LNDF and the PNSF. A Syrian observer shall participate in the work of this committee. Its tasks shall be coordination of political, social and security matters. It shall also supervise the implementation of this agreement. It shall solve the ensuing and urgent problems. It shall supervise reconciliation and mass gatherings. It shall coordinate political and military positions, countering dangers and conspiracies threatening the unity of these forces, or being woven against the Lebanese patriotic position, the Palestinian cause or Syria.

10. The LNDF, Amal movement and PNSF, under the auspices of the Syrian leadership, shall put forward a program to consolidate the alliance and cooperation among them. This program is to enhance the national struggle of these forces, to pursue the joint struggle by all means including armed struggle, and to support the Palestinian revolution in its struggle to liberate Palestine.

11. The Lebanese nationalist forces and the Palestinian nationalist forces reaffirm the importance of the alliance with Syria under the leadership of President Hafez al Assad, to confront the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary plans. In this context, Syria is considered the main force in the Arab homeland confronting the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary plans in the region.

12. The LNDF and the Amal movement consider the PNSF as the recognized national political leadership of the Palestinians in Lebanon. It is so until it is possible to return the PLO to the nationalist line. This is confirmed in the PNSF's political platform.

13. The LNDF and the Amal movement shall guarantee fraternal and decent treatment of the Palestinian brothers in Lebanon. They shall provide them with better living conditions until they are able to achieve their national goals and return to their homeland. This treatment shall be in compliance with what is applied in the Arab countries, for example, Syria.

Damascus, Syria
June 17, 1985

responsible for organizing Palestinian armed presence and specifying the location of this armed presence in the camps, in a manner which does not contradict with Lebanese security and which works for the benefit of the Palestinian revolution.

4. Allowing the Palestinians living in Lebanon to participate in the Palestinian revolution, as regulated by the Palestinian military police and in a form which does not contradict Lebanese dignity and security.

Why should the above points have been omitted from the 16th PNC's resolutions? Why are the attackers of the Damascus agreement sharpening their swords now, saying that it has cancelled the Cairo agreement, when they did not make the slightest move after the political declaration at the 16th PNC session?

The Damascus agreement cancels the Habib agreement

The second fact that we must make clear in response to accusations against the Damascus agreement, is that it de facto cancelled the Philip Habib agreement which was imposed on the Palestinian revolution during the siege of Beirut. We would like to remind those who attack the Damascus agreement of nine of the points in the Philip Habib agreement:

1. «A cease-fire in place will be scrupulously observed by all in Lebanon.»

2. «All the PLO leadership, offices and combatants in Beirut will leave Lebanon peacefully...» with their safe withdrawal guaranteed.

3. «On their departure, PLO personnel will be allowed to carry with them one individual side weapon...The PLO will turn over to the Lebanese Armed Forces as gifts all remaining weaponry in their possession...»

4. It was not allowed to redeploy the PLO fighters in Beirut or other areas of Lebanon.

5. If there were to be political presence for the PLO in Lebanon, this should preferably not be in Beirut.

6. The deployment lines of the Israeli army will be reconsidered after reaching and implementing an agreement.

7. The Lebanese army is responsible for security in all of Beirut.

8. Other armed factions in West Beirut will hand over their

arms to the Lebanese army, and the Syrian units of the Arab Deterrent Force will return to Syria.

9. «The basic concept of this plan is consistent with the objective of the Government of Lebanon that all foreign military forces withdraw from Lebanon.»

These are the terms that were imposed as a result of the siege of Beirut and the balance of forces at the time. It is clear that this agreement cancels the Cairo agreement and all the rights of our people in Lebanon. Our arms were to be handed over and our fighters dispersed. The agreement included our formally taking as given final arrangements that would leave no foreign presence in Lebanon, including that of the Palestinian revolution.

The rightist leadership did not have the courage to cancel the Habib agreement. Possibly this was because of the critical situation, the sensitivity of the balance of forces, and the atmosphere of national unity at that time. But is it then logical to attack the Damascus agreement which cancelled the Habib agreement, and implemented the right of our people to political and military action? Why do they attack the Damascus agreement which deepened the nationalist relations between Palestinians and Lebanese, and which preserves the right of the Palestinian revolution to continue its struggle from Lebanon, side by side with the Lebanese masses and national forces? Is it not unfair to criticize the Damascus agreement which restored respect for the meaning of joint nationalist relations between Lebanese and Palestinians, which stopped bloodshed in the camps and in fact saved them?

Why the right attacks the Damascus agreement

The third fact concerns the credibility of the attackers. Those who now cry out against the Damascus agreement are well-known for their weak political stands throughout the history of the contemporary Palestinian revolution. Most, if not all, of the agreements they have made with the Arab authorities and others reflect a weak political stand. There are many examples, from the agreements made in Amman (after Black September 1970), to the Habib agreement in Beirut. In 1977, the Shtoura agreement was signed under conditions much less difficult than those which existed in the camps during the recent fighting. To those who pretend to forget, we mention some of the points of the Shtoura agreement: (1) removing all armed appearances; (2) hindering those who carry arms outside the camps; (3) withdrawing from the camps the arms which exceed the amount stipulated in the Cairo agreement; (4) stations will be assigned for the Arab Deterrent Force around the camps. Also included was that joint committees would be formed to supervise implementation of the agreement according to a schedule, and that the Arab Deterrent Force would attack any illegal arms stores in any part of Lebanon.

These are the points of an agreement that was signed at a time when the Palestinian revolution enjoyed considerable power from North to South Lebanon. It was at the time of the ascent of the Lebanese national forces, fighting side by side with us, politically and militarily. Yet the Lebanese national forces were disregarded in the Shtoura agreement.

In view of these facts, do those who raise their voices to outbid the Salvation Front in signing the Damascus agreement, have a right to be critical? Can we view the present conditions, the balance of forces and the Damascus agreement as a defeat, yet hold in regard the other agreements which included real concessions concerning the rights and gains of our people in Lebanon and elsewhere? Can we view the agreements signed by the rightist leadership, under conditions better than the present, as victories or proof of their credibility and cleverness? What does this say about the credibility of the Palestinian right's attack on the Damascus agreement?

The roots of the problem

The fourth fact concerns the roots of the problem which we must view in a long-range perspective in order to see the essence of the right-wing's attack on the Damascus agreement. There are two main reasons for this campaign:

First: The right-wing deviators share a common denominator with those who initiated the camp war: an ultimate wish to devastate the camps. The deviators want this in order to take advantage of the catastrophe to go further in their involvement with the US solution for the area, in accordance with the Arafat-Hussein agreement. The second party, the initiators of the war, work to enact this catastrophe in order to strengthen their geopolitical position in Lebanon, and increase their share of the sectarian cake. This party hopes to benefit from an illusory political settlement for Lebanon. They proved their intent to get a bigger share of the cake by initiating the camp war.

Even if they appear to be at odds, these two parties start from a common point, and both will be harmed by the implementation of the Damascus agreement. They will try to keep it from working by all means.

Second: the struggle in the Palestinian arena between two political lines affects all aspects of Palestinian action. The Salvation Front is the pole opposing the deviationist line. The Salvation Front is striving to gain legitimacy in leading the Palestinian people on the basis of a clear program, adhering to the PLO and its patriotic program, and confronting the capitulationist forces. Accordingly, the capitulationist forces put all their energy into defending their positions and policies, by rejecting the leadership and role of the Salvation Front, because it is the antithesis of their capitulation.

The Salvation Front put all its political, military and popular capacities of steadfastness to defend the camps of Beirut, then concluded the Damascus agreement which recognizes it as the leadership of the Palestinian people in Lebanon. In view of this, it is not logical to accuse the Salvation Front and question the credibility of its leadership. This campaign against the Salvation Front is actually an extension of the struggle between the two main political lines in the Palestinian arena; there is no other explanation for it, if we view the terms of the Damascus agreement honestly and concretely.

The deviating rightist leadership has accustomed us to the continuing concessions it has freely made. This same leadership views the Damascus agreement with bitterness, jealous of the military and political leadership of the Salvation Front which was tested for the first time on this level, and proved its credibility. The heroic struggle of our people in the camp war proved their potential for even greater struggle if there is a steadfast leadership with a clear political line, defending Palestinian rights in life and revolution, and defending the PLO national program. In contrast, the capitulating leadership is fearful; it has landed in defeatism and is running after its own interests. It is this leadership that has squandered our people's steadfastness and the gains of their struggle. ●

Rebuilding the Camps

The camp war left the bulk of the Palestinian population in Beirut living in shelters or the public buildings, such as schools, where they had sought shelter. Seventy per cent of the houses in Sabra and Shatila were destroyed, as was the main waterline to these camps and Bourj al Barajneh. It took bulldozers over forty days to remove the debris. 1650 cubic meters of destroyed material was removed from Bourj, and 4300 cubic meters from the area of Sabra's hospital. This massive destruction stands as concrete proof that the aim of this war was to eliminate the camps altogether.

As if to reinforce this, Beirut municipal authorities announced in late July that the city would be beautified by removal of the destruction. According to them, the destroyed houses should not be rebuilt but the space allotted to major roads as part of modernizing Beirut. Concerning the joint committee established to oversee implementation of the Damascus agreement, Beirut Mayor Shafik Sardouk stated that its function was only to remove the destruction, not to rebuild. Both the Palestine National Salvation Front and Syria immediately responded that the Damascus agreement (article 4) insured the return of the camp population to their homes, and rebuilding them. Also, a group of engineers (Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian, mostly volunteers) assessed the damage in order to make a plan for rebuilding.

There are a series of obstacles to rebuilding the camps. One is continuation of the tense situation surrounding the camps, and instances of the Amal movement harassing the residents. In addition, Amal and the Lebanese Army's 6th Brigade have refused any proposals for building temporary housing to meet the needs of the most urgent cases.

Another obstacle is financial. Rebuilding costs have been estimated at no less than 300 million Lebanese pounds. The joint committee has so far only received $1 million from Libya and 50,000 tons of cement from Syria. The majority of Arab regimes have yet to contribute despite their wailing over the Palestinian blood shed in the camp war. Also the rightist PLO leadership cried out during this war, but has yet to offer concrete aid, despite its extensive funds.

The PNSF has assumed basic responsibility for rebuilding. It has outlined an initial plan, starting with the repair of 500 houses in Shatila and 250 in Bourj al Barajneh, to relieve the most urgent cases. By the 1st of August, an on-the-site brick factory had begun production, and reconstruction is now underway. The Salvation Front will make every effort to have this task completed before the winter cold and rain sets in. ●

Destruction in Sabra

All Facts to the Masses Press Release July 24, 1985

A responsible source in the PFLP stated:

Some Arab media published a news item that Dr. George Habash, General Secretary of the PFLP, speaking in Damascus to militants liberated from the Zionist prisons, said that: «Arafat's groups in Beirut are responsible for the recent war of the camps.»

PFLP assures that this news is totally baseless. Dr. Habash confirmed in his speech the analysis which the PFLP has given of that war and the aims of the forces that instigated it. The basic aims were removing the Palestinian Klashinkov and ending the Palestinian national role in Lebanon.

The PFLP's position which is well known to all our masses and the Arab nation, became an integral part of the incidents of the bloody war, and thus cannot be omitted or distorted by any information source.

The responsible source concluded his statement by saying that PFLP had not wanted to reopen the records of that difficult period, but the publication of this erroneous news in the Arab media forced us to clarify the facts, acting on the slogan to which we have been committed since our foundation: *All facts to the masses.*

Stop All Harassment

In late July, Comrade Abu Tayeb, member of the PFLP's Politbureau, made a statement concerning violations of the letter and spirit of the June 17th accord signed in Damascus. His intent was to find a solution for these problems in order to restore confidence among the signing parties.

1. The situation of siege continues around the camps of Shatila and Bourj al Barajneh, as the Amal forces and 6th Brigade have not withdrawn from their positions around the camps as was stated in the accord.

2. The Amal movement is still arresting young Palestinian men in Beirut and South Lebanon. These Palestinians have yet to be released.

3. In the last few days, Amal forces have resumed their policy of harassing and humiliating Palestinians collectively, as when they surrounded Al Bas camp near Sour. Amal forces entered the camp in the night, frightening the women and the children, and carrying out collective punishment on the pretext that one of their positions was fired on from an unknown source.

4. Amal is erecting checkpoints to inspect Palestinians on the only two roads which join the Bekaa with North Lebanon.

Comrade Abu Tayeb concluded by warning of the dangers of the political and informational campaign now focusing on the situation in Saida. He pointed out that such a campaign contributes to the atmosphere of hate and fear that makes possible an explosion of the security situation there. ●

Situation in Saida

Palestine National Salvation Front Initiative

No sooner had the war on the camps of Beirut ended via the Damascus agreement, than focus shifted to Saida, specifically the adjacent Palestinian refugee camp, Ain al Hilweh. Reports circulated about an impending explosion of the security situation. The insinuations were of expected Palestinian infighting and/or a Palestinian-Lebanese conflict.

Of course, there are forces that have interest in such an explosion. Prime among them is the Zionist-fascist alliance which has permanent interests in pitting Palestinians against Lebanese, in order to further divide Lebanon and destroy the Palestinian revolution. Also other forces have opted for a slightly modified sectarian solution in Lebanon, in order to bolster their own dominance.

As is obvious, such an explosion is anathema to the people of Ain al Hilweh, to Palestinian nationalist forces generally, to patriotic Saida and all Lebanon's progressive movement. Thus, extensive efforts have been made to reinforce Lebanese-Palestinian solidarity that has deep historical roots in the Saida area. Based on nationalist Lebanese-Palestinian cooperation, efforts have been made to end any practices or incidents that could be grabbed as a pretext by those wishing to explode the situation.

PNSF delegation

On the Palestinian side, the PNSF has been the active force in promoting these efforts. On two occasions, the PNSF has sent a delegation to the Saida area. The second of these visits occurred July 11-14th. The delegation met with Amal's leadership in Saida, the Nasserite Organization led by Mustafa Saad, the local Lebanese National Democratic Front leadership, the National Political Council of Saida and the Islamic Groups. The delegation also visited Shiite villages in the surrounding area, accompanied by representatives of Amal and Saida's nationalist forces.

The delegation naturally also visited Ain al Hilweh camp, and met with the local PNSF branch. Comrade Abu Maher Yamani, Secretary of the PNSF Secretariat and PFLP representative in the PNSF leadership, met with political and military cadres loyal to Fatah's Central Committee. This was in line with efforts to coordinate with Fatah members who oppose the right-wing leadership's policy and violations which might be taken as a pretext by some to start a battle. The majority of Fatah members in Ain al Hilweh are determined to avoid an explosion, whereby political differences in the PLO would be manipulated to the disadvantage of all.

In all these meetings, the focus was on finding practical means to avert an explosion of the security situation, and to dispell the atmosphere of tension and fear of such an outbreak. Ways were discussed of avoiding inter-Palestinian or Lebanese-Palestinian fighting. Strict measures were decided upon against the infiltration of collaborators and provocaters. The discussions were held in a spirit of building on points of unity, in order to avoid problems that would divert from the struggle against the Israeli occupiers and their puppets, Lahd's SLA. Generally speaking, the response of all forces contacted was positive.

The PNSF delegation stressed that the struggle against the deviation of the Palestinian right should be conducted solely by democratic means (political education, dialogue and activities) and never by force of arms which should be applied only against the main enemy: the Zionist and fascist forces.

To implement all this, there should be regular meetings between the PNSF and Saida's nationalist forces. Violations from any side should be dealt with in a spirit of solidarity, not confrontation. The PNSF emphasized the need for formalizing cooperation so that it develops beyond responding to the problems that arise, to lead to an overall strengthening of the common struggle. ●

PNSF Condemns Assassinations

Communique, July 27th

After the criminal assassination of four Palestinian fighters from Ain al Hilweh camp near Saida, a spokesman for the Palestine National Salvation Front declared:

Suspicious forces in the city of Saida are continuing acts of provocation aimed at exploding the security situation. Yesterday they committed an ugly, new crime by assassinating four Palestinian fighters near Ain al Hilweh camp. While strongly condemning this crime, the Palestine National Salvation Front affirms its determination to:

1. Continue efforts to consolidate the national Lebanese-Palestinian relations and guarantee the security of Saida and the Palestinian camps against suspicious forces who aim to explode the situation by provoking a split between the Lebanese and Palestinian people.

2. Continue to work to strengthen and deepen Palestinian national unity in the area, in order to guarantee the security of the Palestinian camps and block the path of suspicious forces that seek to liquidate the Palestinians' armed role in Lebanon.

The Palestine National Salvation Front has confidence in the Palestinian masses' ability to overcome suspicious enemy plans, and calls upon all the Palestinian masses in the camps in South Lebanon, to be alert to face the danger of physical liquidation which would threaten the future of the revolution.

The Palestine National Salvation Front warns the suspicious forces against continuing their plans. At the same time, we call upon all nationalist personalities in Saida to uncover those behind the assasination and put an end to provocations against the Palestinian masses in the camps in South Lebanon.

Note: Those assassinated were members of the forces loyal to Fatah's Central Committee. Yet they were not among those being sent to Saida by the right-wing leadership for its own purposes; nor were they suspected of any violation. On the contrary, they were original residents of Ain al Hilweh camp and known for their struggle against the Zionist enemy. They were cooperating with the people of the camp and other organizations to avoid any explosion of the security situation.

Compromising on Details

The Palestinian right-wing lets the US Administration pick «acceptable» Palestinians, while hastening an Arab summit.

In defiance of the objective lessons of Palestinian experience and the current balance of power, the Palestinian right wing continues to seek a US-sponsored «solution». The rightist leadership's main preoccupation was clearly articulated by Arafat's promise in mid-May, that he would explicitly accept UN Security Council resolution no.242 (i.e. Israel's right to existence and security), if the US explicitly recognizes the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

King Hussein's May visit to Washington D.C. was intended to pave the way for a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation to meet with US Assistant Secretary of State Murphy in Amman. US officials were reportedly pleased with what Hussein had to say, specifically about the prospect of Hussein gaining PLO acceptance of 242. Moreover, they were reassured that in Hussein's plan the idea of an international conference is only «window dressing». «According to informed sources, Hussein told administration officials that he is just as opposed to Soviet participation as they... Hussein suggested that the US set stiff requirements, such as the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, as a prerequisite for Soviet participation.» («Middle East Policy Survey», May 31, 1985.)

In June, the illegitimate PLO Executive Committee, as well as Fatah's Central Committee, formally approved the formation of a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation. The Jordanian authorities presented the US with a list of Palestinians chosen by the right-wing leadership to participate in the joint delegation's talks with Murphy.

Arafat lets Reagan do the choosing

Thus from compromising on principles, Arafat and his followers have moved to the predictable position of compromising on details. They have diluted the right of the Palestinian people to choose their own representatives by according to the US (and ultimately 'Israel') the prerogative of determining which Palestinians are acceptable for negotiations. To back up the attempt to woo US imperialism, a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation visited a number of European capitals in late June, for talks with officials.

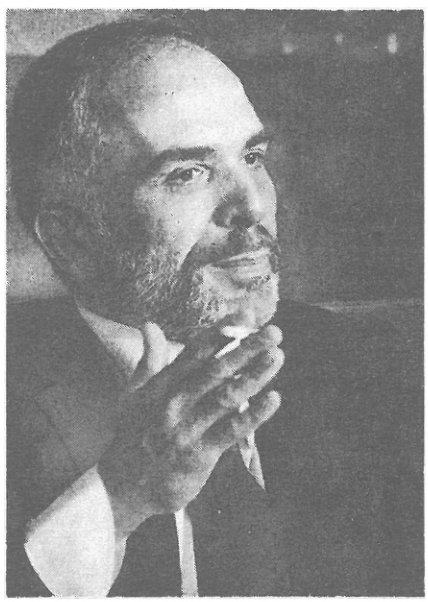
Meanwhile the Palestinian right has endeavored to exploit the tragedy that befell the Palestinian people in May and June when the refugee camps of Beirut were under attack. On the Arab level, Arafat has worked diligently for convening an Arab summit. On the Palestinian level, Executive Committee member Farouk Qaddoumi appealed to all Palestinian forces to transform the unity in struggle, that prevailed in the Beirut camps, into political unity. However, this appeal made no mention of addressing the main issue causing division in the PLO's ranks: Arafat's February 11th accord with King Hussein. This appeal was thus not taken seriously by the majority of resistance organizations that have called for abrogation of this accord as a prerequisite for reestablishing Palestinian national unity. Some had earlier hoped that there were Fatah Central Committee members who had reservations about the February 11th accord, and would break ranks with the right's deviating policy. However, such hopes have proved to be baseless. Fatah's Central Committee is working in a concerted, unified manner to implement the terms of the accord, despite the steady emergence of concrete proof that this undermines not only Palestinian struggle but the essence of the PLO as well.

US reserve and Israeli no's

The right-wing policy is running into other obstacles besides massive Palestinian opposition. The joint delegation visit to Europe showed clearly that these governments have retreated from the 1980 Venice Declaration (which in itself was unsatisfactory, but was hailed as an advance by the Palestinian right at the time). With the exception of Greece, no West European government will chart a course in the Middle East that differs in more than appearance from that of the US. Betting on a formula whereby Western Europe would influence the US, who in turn would pressure 'Israel', is but an illusion. This remains true despite secondary contradictions between the capitalist states, and between any of them and 'Israel'.

Playing its deceptive role as «arbitrator» in the Middle East, the US administration received the Palestinian list for study. The thing to watch is not what might be said about certain names on the list, but that the US hastened to reaffirm that talks with the joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation were only as a prelude to direct negotiations with 'Israel' based on resolutions 242 and 338. By supporting direct negotiations, the US in fact supports the Israelis' right to choose which Palestinians to talk to.

As was to be expected, Shamir rejected the list of Palestinians for the joint negotiating team out of hand, and said the US should do the same. Peres also initially refused the list, for whom it included and whom it omitted. Yet a week later he had found two «acceptable» names: Hanna Seniora (editor of the Arabic daily *Al Fajr*) and Faez Abu Rahma (former head of the Gaza bar association). One need not delve into the personal or political history of these two persons to see why Peres deemed them «acceptable», for this is not the point. The point is that they are resident in the 1967 occupied territories. Endeavoring to ignore not only the PLO



but also the Palestinians as a *people* dispossessed and disenfranchised by Zionism, the Israeli leadership wants to deal with the Palestinians as a minority population who might have some human needs to be addressed on some level, in order to beautify Israeli military rule and abort the masses' daily resistance to occupation. Peres had already signalled his intents by meeting with Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij and Hikmat Masri of Nablus, both known as long-time supporters of the Jordanian option.

New Arab summit?

To fill the gap enforced by the predictable US and Israeli conditions, the rightist Palestinian leadership has thrown itself into the reactionary Arab regimes' efforts to convene an Arab summit. While the US seems in no hurry to talk to the joint delegation, Arafat for his part needs the semblance of Arab consensus to lend credibility to his chosen course before the talks with Murphy.

No Arab summit has been convened since autumn 1982. This reflects the general disarray in official Arab politics due to a number of factors-the Gulf war, Lebanon, etc. More specifically it is related to the reactionary regimes' failure to bridge political differences with Syria, or break Syria's opposition to Camp David in its original and revised forms. This has blocked the consensus policy on which the Arab League is based. So one can ask who wants a summit now and why. What are the possibilities for its being convened? What results can be expected?

The reactionary regimes, especially Jordan, want an official confirmation of their line for solving the Arab-Israeli conflict under US auspices. They, together with the rightist PLO leadership, want «pan-Arab» confirmation of the February 11th accord and a practical plan for implementing it. For this reason there have been intermittant attempts to convene a summit in the recent past, but these have not materialized. What makes this attempt more serious is that the reactionary forces feel encouraged by the differences that arose between various nationalist regimes when the Palestinian camps in Beirut were besieged. The reactionaries hope to play on these differences to attract as many as possible to the summit.

It will be impossible to have the February 11th accord and the reactionary line adopted by a full summit. Yet the reactionary forces may have deemed that the time is ripe to replace the consensus policy with decision-making by majority rule. Jordan has long been pushing for amending the Arab League constitution to this effect, and has tacit Saudi support in this matter.

Besides the political differences separating the nationalist and reactionary regimes, there are many other obstacles to the summit's convention, with various regimes competing for their own particular interests. For example, Iraq has refused to attend unless discussion of the Gulf war is on the agenda. Arafat's interest in gathering a reactionary consensus was seen in his late July visit to Saddam Hussein, to iron out these obstacles. While Arafat was in Baghdad, it was announced by Hassan II of Morocco that the summit is to convene August 7th, with those who want to attend.

The intention of those pushing for this summit could make it the most dangerous Arab summit to date. Yet the fact that many obstacles and unresolved contradictions remain gives the nationalist regimes and forces good chances for blocking its convening or staging a boycott that would expose the summit's unrepresentative nature. Blocking the summit and its possible results puts the same demands to the progressive and nationalist forces and regimes, as does defeating the February 11th accord and the right-wing policy generally. The key to rising to this challenge lies in genuine alliance and solidarity between all nationalist and progressive regimes and forces, especially strengthening the Lebanese nationalist-Palestinian-Syrian alliance. Only the enemy forces actually profited from the war of the camps in Beirut. It is the duty of all opponents of the right-wing policy to close ranks in common struggle against the main enemies: imperialism, Zionism and reaction.

See update on Arab summit in Arab World section, page 20.

Military Operations Escalate

This spring there began an escalation of military operations against the Zionist occupiers in Palestine, which was even noted by the Zionist press and authorities. This steady rise of resistance stands as concrete evidence that the Palestinian masses under occupation refuse the right-wing's attempt to put a lid on the liberation struggle.

May

The first week of May, acts of resistance were frequent. Every day Israeli vehicles were hit by stones in various parts of the occupied West Bank. On May 4th, an Israeli settler was stabbed in the Gaza market. On May 6th, a home made bomb was detonated by remote control near Qalqilia, as an Israeli bus passed on the way to Shomron settlement. Though the Israeli radio reported no damage or casualties, the press noted that the explosion disturbed the Israeli authorities for its resemblence to the method so successfully employed by freedom fighters in South Lebanon.

On May 11th, a bomb destroyed an Israeli bus in occupied Jerusalem. It was timed to go off as US Secretary of State Schultz met Israeli Prime Minister Peres, and was accompanied by two other explosions in the same area.

On May 14th, an Israeli bus heading for Kiryat Arba settlement was fired upon, injuring one settler. On May 19th, an Israeli soldier was stabbed in Jerusalem. On May 22nd, four petrol bombs were thrown at an Israeli bus driving between Ariel and Maale Ephraim settlements in the northern part of the West Bank. On May 28th, a petrol bomb was thrown at an army post in Jabaliya camp in the occupied Gaza Strip.

According to the admissions of a Zionist spokesman, covering the period from January through May of this year, there were 37 armed operations against Israeli targets in the part of Palestine occupied in 1948, and 127 in the regions occupied in 1967. The spokesman also noted 116 instances of Israeli targets being hit by fire bombs or stones in the same five months.

June

Revolutionaries in the Gaza Strip began the month of June with four operations in three days: A grenade was thrown at an Israeli patrol in Gaza; another was cast at an army patrol approaching Nusseirat camp. On June 3rd, two Israelis were injured by stones thrown at a bus driving through the Strip. The same day, the Israeli military headquarters came near to destruction by a booby-trapped car, to be detonated by remote control. However, Israeli sappers dismantled the bomb at the last minute.

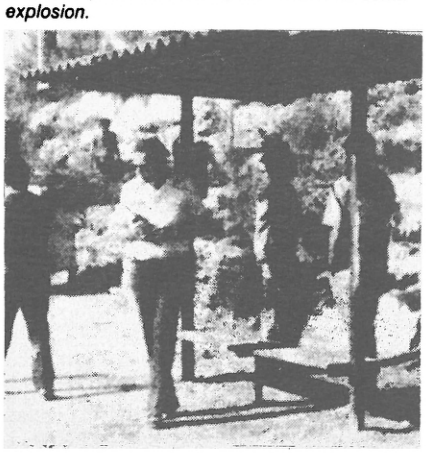
In mid-June, four bombs exploded in the space of a week. One of these was at the bus stop of Ramot settlement near Jerusalem. Another targeted the Israeli factory, Iskur, at Kiryat Gat near Askelon. *Jerusalem Post* reported a total of 24 acts of armed resistance in June, while *Hadashot* reported 33. *Jerusalem Post* noted that the operations appeared to be mounted locally, using home made devices.

July

Armed resistance continued apace in July. On the 11th, two operations were successfully executed. The first destroyed an Israeli warehouse in Hadera. The second targeted a swimming pool for Zionist soldiers, inflicting losses not admitted by the Zionist forces. Two days later, Palestinian revolutionaries threw a fire bomb at the house of a collaborator in Rafah in the Gaza Strip. On the 14th, a Zionist military car was attacked with a fire bomb in Kanius camp, also in the Gaza Strip.

On July 17th, Palestinian revolutionaries detonated explosive charges in the office of the Israeli company, Tseim, destroying it. This was the fourth explosion of the kind against Zionist targets in Haifa in the last two months. The last one aimed at the Zionist court in the city.

Israeli police inspect bus stop at French Hill settlement, near Jerusalem, after mid-June bomb explosion.



On the same day, a Zionist police station was attacked in the village of Toba, near Nablus. Two days later, a Palestinian militant attacked a group of Zionists in Jerusalem; five were wounded and taken to hospital, while the young militant was arrested.

On July 18th, explosive charges were detonated near the Hebrew University. The Israeli radio admitted no casualties, but the Zionist forces enacted an arrest campaign. At the same time, Brigadier Uri Yaron died of serious wounds inflicted by a freedom fighter, but the Israeli radio claimed he died in a car accident.

In three days of mid-July, there were nine attacks against Zionist military targets. A Palestinian military spokesman announced that a resistance unit had attacked a military patrol with machine guns on the 20th, as it was heading for Karmiel settlement outside Hebron.

On the 24th, a Zionist military car was attacked by militants using machine guns in Al Shajjayeh, destroying the car and killing or wounding the occupants. The same day a fire bomb was thrown at a border guard car near Bani Sheilieh in the Gaza Strip. On the 27th-28th, there were three more attacks on the occupation forces in the Strip. Palestinian revolutionaries attacked a military patrol in Jabaliya camp with hand grenades. Others attacked a military vehicle in Khan Yunis, while a third attack targeted a military car in Al Sheikh Ajlin street in Gaza.

On the 27th, Katyusha rockets were fired at Kiryat Shimouna settlement, inflicting losses and starting a fire.

On the 30th, a Zionist terrorist identified by Israeli radio as Albert Bukhris, operator of the canteen serving the Nablus military headquarters, was killed in Nablus. Bukhris was a resident of A-

fouleh in the Galilee where Arabs were attacked after the dead bodies of two settlers were discovered the preceding week; he had participated in the violent Zionist mob.

The Zionist authorities are escalating repression, reviving the draconian measures provided for in the 1945 emergency regulations, first imposed in Palestine by the British and later adopted by the Israeli state. Already two of those liberated in the most recent prisoner exchange have been rearrested, one of them under administrative detention in accordance with the 1945 regulations.Al Najah University has been closed for two months for «inflammatory» posters. Mass deportations are being threatened as is the transfer to desolate areas of entire refugee camps if stones are thrown at Zionist vehicles. Though they differ in their rhetoric, the two wings of the Zionist government converge on the essence of this campaign. Whether they advocate annexing the 1967 occupied territories, or subjecting them to Jordan's monarchy, Zionists concur on the necessity of breaking the Palestinians' resistance. This is what our revolutionaries are fighting. ●

Support Striking Prisoners

Communique, July 29th

A spokesman for the PFLP's Politbureau made the following statement concerning the hunger strike declared by Palestinian prisoners in Moscobiya prison in occupied Jerusalem:

It is the second week of the strike, and the Zionist prison authorities continue to reject the demands of the strikers. These demands are for improvement of the conditions of imprisonment, stopping the prison authorities' inhuman treatment of prisoners, and quick action to provide medicine for dangerously ill prisoners.

We have information that the condition of the strikers is steadily deteriorating. We call on all committees and humanitarian organizations, including the Red Cross, Amnesty International and the International Organization for Human Rights, to intervene quickly to press the Zionist occupation authorities to provide our prisoners with good conditions according to the terms of the Geneva Convention for prisoners of war.

First General Congress

The Progressive Front for Trade Union Action

The Progressive Front for Trade Union Action in the occupied territories held its first general congress in the early part of May 1985. The congress met under the slogan «towards a united trade union movement on a militant democratic basis.» The congress was attended by leading members of the Palestinian trade unions, representatives of mass organizations and a number of patriotic personalities.

The PFTUA was officially founded in 1982, but it had existed as a tendency within the occupied territories' trade union movement for many years. The formal announcement of the PFTUA came in response to the exacerbation of poor economic conditions for the Palestinian working class, the need for more militant forms of trade union action and to rally the working class in the occupied territories to play a leading role in the national liberation struggle. As early as 1979, workers representing this trend gained strength in the Shoemakers Union in Hebron, and won seats in the union's administrative council. The union succeeded in broadening its base among Palestinian workers and became a member of the General Federation of Palestinian Trade Unions in the West Bank. The PFTUA has won seats in the administrative committees of the St. George Hotel Workers Union, the East Jerusalem Electricity Co. Workers Union, the Hospice Hospital Workers Union and others, and plays a leading role in these unions.

Fifteen Palestinian unions were represented in the PFTUA at the general congress. These unions have opened their doors to any Palestinian worker regardless of political or ideological affiliation. The PFTUA has organized to unify the whole Palestinian working class within the general trade unions and has taken many initiatives to avoid splits within the General Federation of Palestinian Trade Unions in the West Bank.

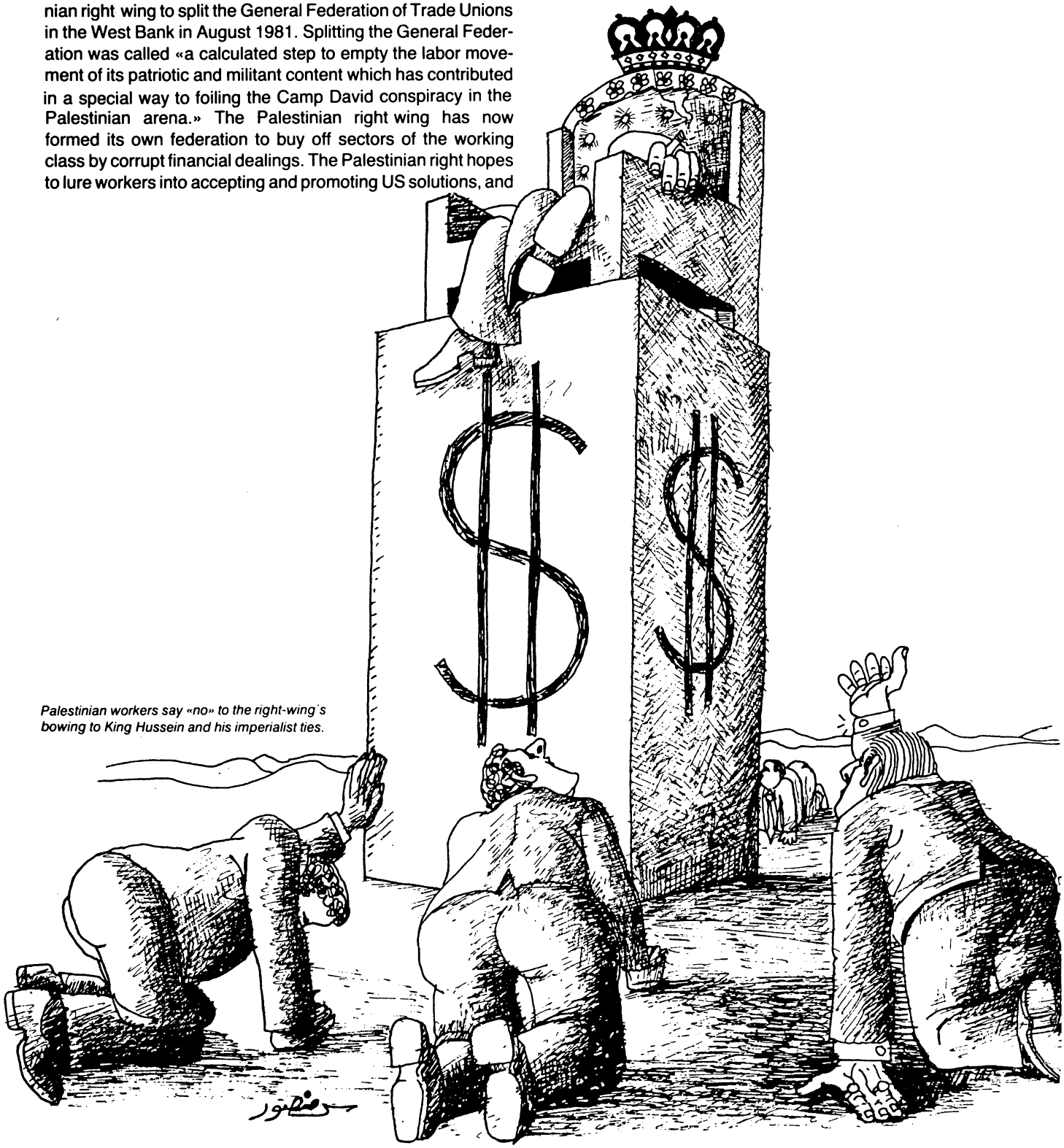
The general congress was called to solidify the internal organization of the PFTUA so that it can play a leading role in the general trade union struggle and unify the trade union movement in the occupied territories. To this end, the general congress defined immediate tasks for the Front to develop in 1985.

Congress report

On the poltical level, the report of the congress condemned the February 1985 accord between Arafat and King Hussein. The report stated: «We support the formation of the Palestine National Salvation Front. We consider it to be a pioneering and fundamental step along the road of defeating ▶

the Amman accord and returning the PLO to the patriotic trench. We believe that the Salvation Front will play a significant role in helping large sections of the patriotic bourgeoisie to stay on the course of rising to the challenges of imperialism, Zionism and reaction, instead of letting them fall prey to the quick pace of the rightist stand.» The patriotic bourgeoisie could only be won over if there is unity among all Palestinian patriotic and democratic forces in mounting the practical steps necessary for the mass, political and military struggle.

The congress report condemned attempts by the Palestinian right wing to split the General Federation of Trade Unions in the West Bank in August 1981. Splitting the General Federation was called «a calculated step to empty the labor movement of its patriotic and militant content which has contributed in a special way to foiling the Camp David conspiracy in the Palestinian arena.» The Palestinian right wing has now formed its own federation to buy off sectors of the working class by corrupt financial dealings. The Palestinian right hopes to lure workers into accepting and promoting US solutions, and hindering the struggle of democratic forces in the working class. Already Palestinian-Jordanian funds distributed in the occupied territories are confined to right-wing institutions used to forge an unholy alliance with the Jordanian regime. These funds have been used for such purposes within the trade union movement, making it an inevitable necessity for democratic forces to consolidate and preserve the legitimate Palestinian trade unions. The Front stressed the necessity of mobilizing all resources to restore the unity and effectiveness of legitimate unions on a militant and democratic basis.



Palestinian workers say «no» to the right-wing's bowing to King Hussein and his imperialist ties.

National and class struggle

The congress rejected the notion that class struggle in the occupied territories should be frozen until after liberation. It accused rightists of using this line to strike deals with the management of firms at the expense of the workers. The dialectical relationship between the national struggle and class struggle is very important in the current phase. Sections of the bourgeoisie continue to exploit workers, and sectors of the bourgeoisie have adopted a capitulationist orientation which makes class struggle inevitable.

The congress reports stated that there was a crisis in the working class movement in the occupied territories. The Palestinian right wing is responsible for splitting the General Federation of Trade Unions. Unity is lacking within legitimate general unions. There now exist parallel unions for workers in the same occupation, and the right-wing has objected to workers of the same occupation establishing their own united unions. These practices isolate the trade union movement from the masses.

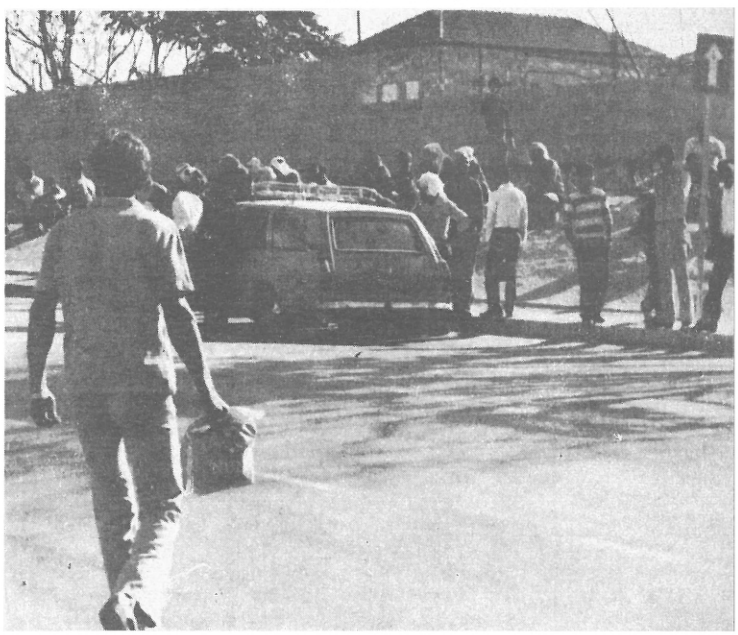
For working class unity

To meet the current crisis, the PFTUA vowed to expand existing branches of its unions and to form new ones in all parts of the occupied territories. The purpose of broader organization is to better workers' conditions and to organize workers in the national liberation struggle. Specifically, the Front will focus on forming trade union organizations in all work places and residential areas of the Gaza Strip. It will coordinate efforts with other progressive forces to bring down the reactionary leadership of the General Union of Palestinian Workers in Gaza.

Programs were formulated for education of workers, to raise their political and trade union consciousness, as well as for training more union organizers. The PFTUA will publish a newsletter entitled *The Worker* on a regular basis. In addition, bulletins for individual unions will be published, along with pamphlets with topics related to the state of the Palestinian working class and its role in the national struggle. The PFTUA will work to solidify its self-sufficient financial base in order to remain independent.

But the main task of the Front is to reactivate the militant role of the working class in the trade union movement in the political struggle - the struggle against all Israeli occupation schemes, the struggle against Israeli laws which restrict the freedom of trade union organizations, the struggle to defeat the Amman accord and the Palestinian right wing's line, the struggle to return the PLO to the national line, and the struggle to prevent Jordanian and rightist figures from moving to put the Amman accord into effect through meetings with Zionist officials. ●

Jerusalem slave market: Palestinians reduced to finding daily work in Israel.



Why the Split?

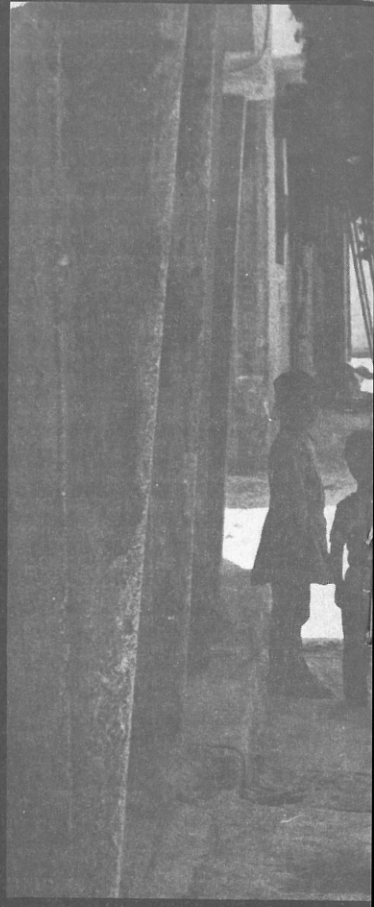
Background to the division in the Palestinian trade union movement

Palestinian workers were among the first in the Arab world to organize themselves, the first trade union being formed in Haifa in 1921. From the beginning the Palestinian trade union movement had a political as well as a labor focus. Beside defending their rights vis-a-vis the British colonial authority (a major employer), workers mobilized against the encroachments of Zionist colonization which aimed to deprive Palestinians of work altogether.

Originally trade union activity was most concentrated in the coastal area of Palestine, but with the Zionist occupation of 1948, it shifted focus to the West Bank, having been banned in the Zionist state. With the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the implicit political significance of the General Federation of Trade Unions in the West Bank became even greater, as part of the Palestinian masses' resistance to occupation.

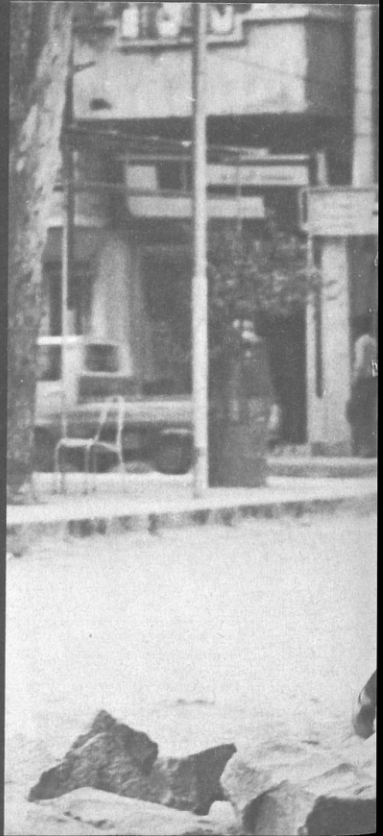
Being under occupation only accentuates the importance of working class unity. Yet the Palestinian right-wing's efforts to dominate the scene in the Federation, as elsewhere, eventually led to division. The right-wing of Fatah's leadership insisted on dominating the Federation's leadership through organizational means. They mobilized members who supported them, keeping out new members and unions where the progressive forces dominated. In 1981, the right-wing engineered an undemocratic election in the Federation where their men, Shehadi Minawi, replaced Adel Ghanem, long-time General Secretary of the Federation and progressive trade unionist. Many local unions refused to recognize this election. De facto there were two federations: the legitimate one headed by Adel Ghanem and including the progressive forces; and the split led by Minawi, which received the funds from the PLO-Jordanian joint committee, as well as from reactionary regimes. Though this split occurred in 1981, it reflects in general the differences that have more recently divided the PLO, after the right-wing's policy began to openly deviate from the national program.

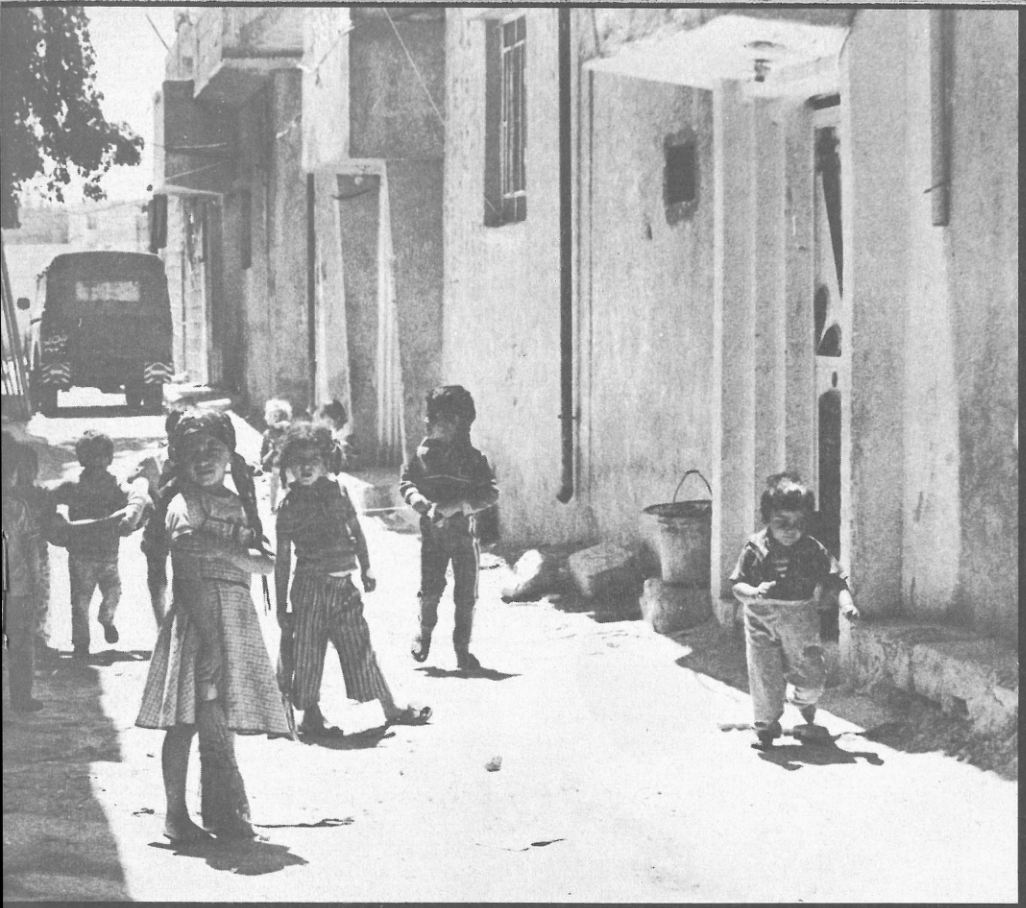
Unfortunately problems have also arisen within the progressive federation because it has clung to outdated rules and regulations which block the admission of new members and recognition of newly formed unions. The Progressive Front for Trade Union Action works to mobilize these forces who are kept out of the federation. Those in the Progressive Front who are members in the federation headed by Adel Ghanem, naturally retain their membership and activity in the federation. ●



Palestinia
in Camps

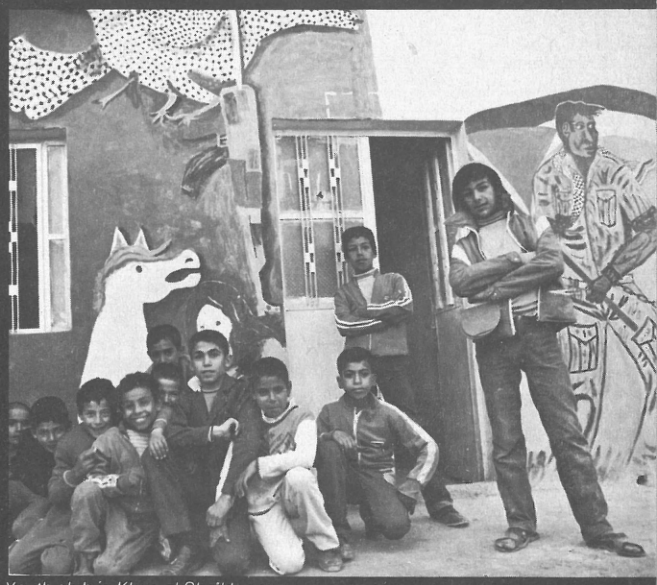
The pictures on this page are all taken in Yar
situated on the outskirts of Damascus.



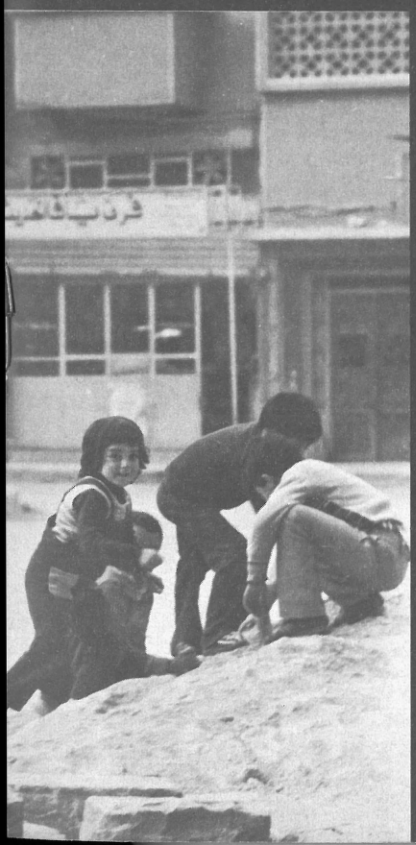


n Children in Syria

nouk camp, the largest Palestinian camp in Syria,



Youth club in Khan al Sheikh camp



The Islamic Meeting and the National Program

On July 9th, 13 Lebanese Muslim leaders meeting in Damascus with Syrian Vice-President Khaddam agreed on a plan entitled «The National Program for Solving the Lebanese Crisis». This program proposes to end the sectarian structure of the Lebanese state and institutions, enabling equal opportunity, rights and duties for all. It calls for reorganizing the army and formulating a new constitution, stressing Lebanon's unity as well as its Arab patriotic identity and role. Also agreed on was a security plan for West Beirut: withdrawing all armed men from the streets, closing militia offices and assigning security duties solely to the Internal Security Forces and the Lebanese Army, with Syrian observers monitoring implementation.

Participants in the Damascus meeting also agreed to form the Front for National Alliance, grouping the parties of the Lebanese National Democratic Front (LNDF), the Amal movement, the National Political Council for Saida, and a number of other patriotic forces and figures. This front sets a precedent, for Amal has previously refused to enter a formal alliance with the national and progressive forces. The impetus for the new program and front was common desire to end the disorder and internal strife plaguing West Beirut in the recent period. This had assumed sectarian dimensions with one group striving to dominate the nationalist areas, and secondary conflicts taking precedence over the struggle against the main enemies. Muslim leaders met in Damascus to end this situation, for it threatened the unity of the nationalist forces at a time when Lebanon still faces lingering Israeli occupation and the fascist forces' divisive plans. The agreement reached is a minimum for tackling the Lebanese crisis which has become steadily more complicated and deep-rooted. Ending the sectarian system requires radical change, not simply a reshuffling to create a new kind of «balance». The forces advocating democratic reform must themselves leave behind every vestige of sectarian thinking and practice.

Participants in the Damascus meeting

Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rashid Karami
Education Minister Salim Hoss
Transport Minister Walid Jumblatt, leader of the Progressive Socialist Party and the LNDF
Justice Minister Nabih Berri, leader of the Amal movement
Defense Minister Adel Osseiran
Mufti of the Republic, Sheikh Hassan Khaled
Jaafarite Mufti Sheikh Abdelamir Kabalan
Vice-President of the Higher Shiite Council, Sheikh Mohammad Mahdi Shamseddin
Druze Sheikh Akl Mohammad Abu Shakra
House Speaker Hussein Husseini
Sidon Deputy Nazih Bizri
Mustafa Saad, General Secretary of the Saida Nasserite Organization
Director General of Dar al Fatwa, Hussein Kuwatly.

If the stated goals are ever implemented in practice, the consensus reached in Damascus would be «a turning point in the history of relations between Syria and Lebanon's national forces», as it was characterized by the Lebanese Communist Party. In any case, by uniting their ranks and reasserting demands for democratic reform, the nationalists put the ball in President Amin Gemayel's court, again testing if he will act as Lebanon's President or the President of a particular sect. The Damascus meeting is intended as a prelude to new attempts at inter-Lebanese reconciliation, leading to dialogue with Lebanon's President and Christians.

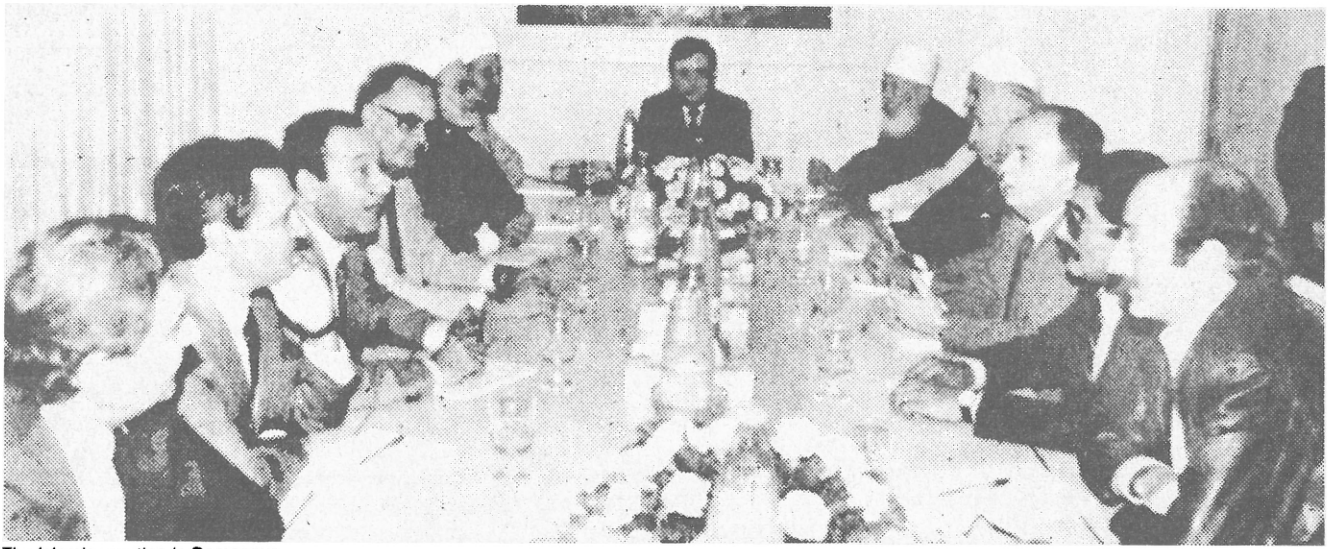
«The «National Program» faces a range of obstacles to implementation. One obstacle is seen in the concept of «Muslim-Christian» dialogue, for the fascist forces lay claim to representing the Christians. Amin Gemayel tried to belittle the Damascus accord without directly contradicting it: He equated it with the principles adopted by Karami's national unity cabinet in 1984, which have remained ink on paper in great part due to Gemayel's own handling of the presidency in the interests of his party, the Phalangists. The main components of the fascist Lebanese Front, the Phalangists and Chamoun's National Liberal Party, openly criticized the accord. Chamoun interpreted it as «auto-security» for the Muslims, justifying the fascists' «auto-security» in predominantly Christian areas. The fascists are betting on the nationalist forces' failure to reorganize and unify their ranks. Thus the fascists could again avoid the renewed demand for reforms.

Fascists close ranks

At the same time, the fascists scuttled to reunify their ranks in the face of this new attempt to abolish the sectarian system on which their privileges rest. The procedure charted by the Phalangist Party for resolving its tactical differences with the Lebanese Forces militias was not due for completion until a congress this autumn. However, on July 15th, the Lebanese Forces announced that their military forces had united with the Phalangist militia loyal to Amin Gemayel. One can question whether this has truly ended the internal contradictions that led to Geagea's revolt in the spring and recurring, though usually unreported clashes in East Beirut. Yet the closing of the ranks was intended to put the fascists in a better position to sabotage «The National Program» whether by Amin Gemayel's political maneuvering or by unleashing a new round of violence.

Patriotic readiness

The obstacle posed by the fascist forces was directly addressed by LNDF leader Walid Jumblatt: As the security plan was about to be implemented in West Beirut in mid-July, he declared: «What is happening may be useful and may lead to a truce, but it will not lead to a solution...There can be no solution as long as the Phalangist Party exists.» The nationalist forces cooperated with implementation of the new security plan



The Islamic meeting in Damascus

in order to normalize the situation in West Beirut. Yet their vanguard forces remain alert in case of fascist instigations. The security plan did not demilitarize the frontline facing the fascist forces in East Beirut. Nor did it include the southern outskirts of Beirut where the Amal militiamen predominate.

Flashpoints

There are other flashpoints from which the Lebanese situation could explode. Pitched battles raged in Tripoli in the North as the Muslim leaders met in Damascus; these continued and can always be ignited by reactionaries who oppose reconciliation. In South Lebanon, the crisis of Jezzine remains boiling because Lahd's South Lebanese Army has refused to withdraw from the city. The «security zone», nominally patrolled by the SLA, is still under Israeli occupation, a permanent launching pad for new aggression against civilians. In June alone, 16 people were killed by the SLA/IDF, while thousands fled their homes when the SLA shelled villages just across from the «security zone».

Israeli military presence in the «security zone» also makes it the base for continued Zionist-fascist coordination. Dany Chamoun of the Lebanese Front recently stated that the SLA is a necessary protection from the Israelis (sic) and that he will thus cooperate with the SLA. In early July, the SLA (i.e. IDF) began training 400 «Christians» so that they could attack the nationalist forces east of Saida, on the pretext of «Christians returning to their homes.»

The Israelis are also prepared for destabilization operations, their so-called «mobile defense». As the Muslim leaders met in Damascus, the Israeli air force staged a bombing raid on the Palestinian camps in North Lebanon, killing 31 and injuring 60, while dropping delayed action bombs to ensure further casualties. This was hardly credible as «retaliation» for the previous day's car bomb against their forces in the «security zone», for this heroic operation was claimed by the Syrian Social National Party. More probably it was intended to tell the Lebanese meeting in Damascus that they should hold the Palestinians in tow or face the consequences. A similar message was delivered in the night of July 23rd, when Israeli gunboats shelled Saida's harbor and surrounding hills, after chasing a ship laden with cement on the pretext that it was engaged in unspecified «suspicious activity.»

'Israel' has clear interests in any diversion from the main conflict as when Amal attacked the Palestinian camps of Beirut in May. The struggle to implement «The National Program» stands as a test of the nationalist forces ability to unite their ranks to protect Lebanon from the Zionist-fascist plans. ●

The National Unity Front

Lebanese nationalist leaders met in Shtoura on August 6th, to establish the National Unity Front. In attendance at the founding conference of the Front were Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblatt, Amal leader Nabih Berri, Secretary General of the Lebanese Communist Party George Hawi, Syrian Social Nationalist Party Chairman Issam Mahairi, Regional Secretary of the Lebanese Baath Assem Kanso, Osama Saad of the Nasserite Organization in Saida, and members of the Lebanese Parliament and other political parties.

The founding platform of the Front called for backing the national resistance in southern Lebanon to completely liberate the country from the Zionist occupation forces, strengthening relations with Syria and the Palestinian people, drawing up a new constitution to abolish the sectarian political system, rebuilding the Lebanese Army, and giving priority in reconstruction funds to areas ravaged by the civil war. ●

Phalange General Secretary Karameh: «A Christian president is the major guarantee for the Christian presence in Lebanon, and nothing will make us give up this guarantee.»

The Arab Summit

Arab Reaction Meets in Casablanca

Despite the boycott by Democratic Yemen, Algeria, Libya, Syria and Lebanon, representatives of 16 Arab states convened for a summit in Casablanca, Morocco, on August 7th. This is the first time an Arab summit has been carried out despite an organized boycott of member states. As such, it marks a dangerous turning point:The reactionary regimes have signalled that they are prepared to unilaterally pursue their efforts to resolve the Arab-Zionist conflict via US solutions. In this sense, Casablanca was Reagan's summit, marking an advance for imperialism's designs to further divide the Arab world, in order to impose its own hegemony.

Most disturbing, the Palestinian right-wing led by Yaser Arafat not only participated in the Casablanca summit, but was a moving force in its being convened and in its deliberations.

Still the proceedings and results of the Casablanca summit revealed that Arab reaction does not yet have complete confidence in its own ability to pursue its chosen course without obstacles. While the reactionaries are dead set on involvement in US solutions, they hesitate to be exposed as traitors to the Palestinian and Arab cause, which they normally use to contrive legitimacy for their corrupt rule. In short, they want to avoid the fate of Sadat - his isolation and his assassination. After all, the final end of these regimes is to create reactionary stability in the area to insure that they can maintain their own power. They are thus concerned to find ways to preempt the opposition that can be expected from the nationalist regimes, the Palestinian revolution and the Arab masses in general. Syria in particular has been recognized by all as a major power in the region, and there are many signs that the reactionaries want to absorb the opposition of the anti-Camp David forces. The fact that King Fahd did not himself represent the Saudis at Casablanca is one sign that the Saudis want to keep open lines to Syria. They hope to emerge as the mediators of a new Arab consensus.

For the same reasons, the Casablanca summit did not take a definitive stand on the February 11th agreement concluded between Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan, or its concrete implementation in the joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation for «peace» talks with the US and 'Israel'. The final statement said: «The summit heard detailed explanations from King Hussein and Yaser Arafat about the February 11th agreement signed in Amman. The summit highly values the explanations of Yaser Arafat and King Hussein about the adherence of this agreement to the Fez plan. The summit considers the February 11th agreement as an implementation of the Arab peace program for a comprehensive, just, peaceful settlement which guarantees the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from all occupied Arab territories, first and foremost Jerusalem...»

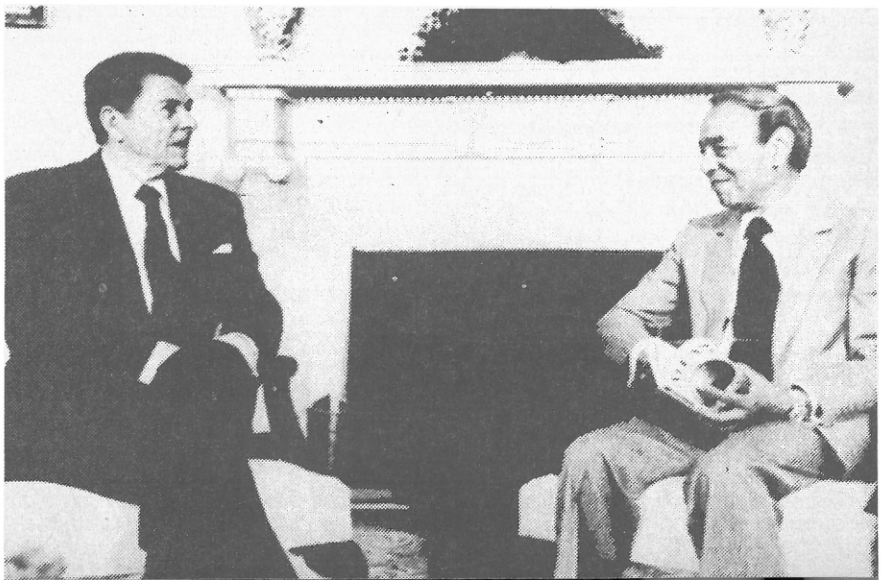
This seemingly non-committal wording represents a compromise between the summiteers who had tactical differences about how to present their intents. While King Hussein argued insistently for the summit to express open approval of the February 11th agreement, Arafat and the majority of participants opposed this, because they do not want to worsen existing Arab differences.

In fact, the Casablanca summit did not announce any ground-breaking decisions, though it did back the Iraqi position in the Gulf war more strongly than before. The main decisions were on the establishment of committees. One committee, chaired by Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, is charged with reconciling Jordan and Syria, and Iraq with Syria. Another, chaired by Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Mauritania, should reconcile Iraq with Libya, and the PLO with Libya. Notably, no committee was formed to reconcile Arafat with Syria.

From this one can see that the Arab reactionary regimes prefer, if possible, to recreate a semblance of official Arab «solidarity» before convening the next and the *real* summit which they scheduled for October in Riyadh. In this perspective the Casablanca summit was a threat to the nationalist regimes: If they do not compromise on their positions, the Casablanca summiteers will go it alone and enforce their policy as the official majority.

Thus, the summit in Casablanca has a double message: On the one hand, Arab reaction, joined by the Palestinian right-wing, is more than ever determined to enter into the US solution for the Middle East conflict. On the other hand, the nationalist regimes still have the power to hinder and expose these efforts. This potential can be realized by the nationalist regimes seriously implementing their declared positions, and increasing their alliance and support to the nationalist and revolutionary forces in the common struggle against Camp David and its new variations. ●

The summit host King Hassan of Morocco, is one of America's favorite Arabs.



Sudan

Biggest demonstration since Numeiri's fall puts the ruling Military Council on the spot.

Sudanese mass organizations and trade unions are showing growing irritation with the contradictory policies of General Abdul-Rahman Swareddahab. On July 4th, more than 40,000 Sudanese amassed in Khartoum for the largest demonstration since the overthrow of Numeiri in April. The same coalition of trade unions, students and progressive political parties were this time demonstrating against General Swareddahab and the ruling military council, for refusing to demand the extradition of Numeiri from Egypt. The demonstrators marched to the Egyptian embassy, successfully impressing on the ruling military council that the Sudanese people are still awaiting concrete results from the overthrow of Numeiri.

Within days of the mass demonstration, the military council issued a formal request to Egypt for Numeiri's extradition to stand trial for the crimes of his regime. The Mubarak government has balked at any suggestion that Numeiri be handed over to Sudanese officials. Instead, he is being protected in an expensive villa in Alexandria.

General Swareddahab has taken great pains to preserve Sudan's long standing special role in the Egyptian-American axis. The request for Numeiri's extradition was a *pro forma* gesture designed more to appease growing internal opposition than to actually make pressure for Numeiri's return. When Egypt replied that extradition was prohibited by the Egyptian constitution, General Swareddahab told *The New York Times* on July 15th, «I respect their laws.» He also assured American reporters that Numeiri would not be tried in absentia.

Mubarak has already paid a friendly visit to Khartoum on June 17th, to insure that there will be no erratic moves away from Numeiri's regional policy. Mubarak met Swareddahab again the second week of July in Addis Ababa at the Organization of African Unity summit conference. At the end of July, Swareddahab announced that he would visit Cairo in the near future. After the 1978 Camp David accords, Numeiri signed an agreement with the United States, pledging to abide by the Camp David accords. His was the only Arab regime besides Egypt to make such a formal undertaking to the US. In 1982, Numeiri signed an agreement with Mubarak on joint economic development and eventual integration of the two countries. These two agreements have not been abrogated, nor has General Swareddahab made any indication that he is contemplating doing so any time in the future.

Swareddahab attempts to strike a «balance»

To offset Sudan's continuing close ties with Egypt, Swareddahab has attempted to give his regime a national face by signing military protocols with Libya. Libya has agreed to supply Sudan with some military equipment and train several hundred military personnel. But Swareddahab has also taken pains to reassure the Reagan Administration of his continuing loyalty. In *The New York Times* interview he stated, «I am not at all worried that our relations with Libya might affect our relations with America. There is nothing that our friends in the West should be worried about. This is not a military pact or treaty.» Clearly, Swareddahab is worried that the Reagan Administration will limit or cut the 400 million dollars that was supplied to famine-stricken Sudan in the past year.

Swareddahab has declared a one year period of military rule before elections for a civilian government. This is unacceptable to the coalition of unions and professional organizations that mounted the anti-Numeiri demonstrations in April. Swareddahab has also failed to convince the Sudanese People's Liberation Army in the south of the country that he is charting a course different from Numeiri. Talk of bringing members of the SPLA into the new cabinet led nowhere and SPLA leader Doctor John Garang has stated that the Sudanese army attacks against the South have never stopped. (See *Democratic Palestine* No. 9 - June 1985)

SPLA escalates struggle

The SPLA has escalated its struggle with some of the largest military operations in the two year war. The SPLA launched a major operation near ▶

Gardod on June 12, against Sudanese army troops. On July 19th, the SPLA announced that it had killed hundreds of Sudanese army troops in another major battle in the South.

Rather than negotiate with the SPLA, Swareddahab decided to reactivate a joint ministerial cooperation committee proposed between Ethiopia and Sudan in 1982. The ministerial committee never actually met during the reign of Numeiri, but Swareddahab and Ethiopian head of state Col.Mengistu announced at the OAU summit that it would convene «immediately to finally reestablish normal relations.»

Part of the normalization negotiations is a proposal for an end to Ethiopia's support for the SPLA and Sudan's support for Eritrean and Tigrean movements. Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs told AFP on July 24th, «We are in the process of negotiating the departure of the Eritreans from Sudan and other opposition groups. We have stopped all forms of military assistance to the Eritreans such as the arms traffic from our territory. We are doing our best so that our country does not serve as a base against the Ethiopian government.» But the Ethiopian government has not indicated that it will stop its support for the SPLA. It is unlikely to do so. Besides, the SPLA's existence is not dependent on external support; it has a popular mass base, controls wide regions of southern Sudan and has relatively little need for external financing.

Both internal pressures and the necessity of taking a clear line on regional and international alliances will mean that the ruling Sudanese military council and Swareddahab himself cannot continue to play both sides of the fence for long. Sudan is in a revolutionary situation against the backdrop of 9 million Sudanese facing starvation, armed resistance in the South and a mobilized political mass movement in Khartoum. ●

Terror Attacks in Kuwait

Who is behind the terror in Kuwait?

Kuwait was exposed to a terrorist attack on July 11th in which dozens of people were killed or wounded. The time bombs exploded in two cafes on Gulf Street and in the Salmiya district when they were jammed with families. The latest terrorist action was preceded in May by a car bomb explosion, also in Gulf Street, while a car carrying the Emir of Kuwait was passing. The Emir was slightly injured in the blast; 5 people were killed and twelve others wounded.

Why doesn't the Kuwaiti government name the terrorists?

The latest terrorist action came only one day after the end of a meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers in the Gulf Cooperation Council convened in the City of Abha in Saudi Arabia. During the meeting, Saudi Arabia exerted all its efforts to convince Kuwait to join the GCC Joint Security Pact which the Kuwaiti government has refused many times before since the pact contradicts the principles of the Kuwaiti constitution.

The explosion in the public cafes occurred three days after the Kuwaiti parliament accepted the suggestion of its speaker to halt the financial support given to Jordan, Syria and the PLO as part of the steadfastness assistance agreed upon at the Riyadh Arab Summit Conference in 1978. The reason for stopping the steadfastness aid was because it has not been used to confront the Zionist enemy, but is used against the Palestinian people and to implement a capitulatory solution embodied in the Hussein-Arafat agreement.

Kuwaiti public and official reactions to the July explosions were characterized by a great deal of wisdom. Officials and members of parliament warned against making nervous and hasty decisions. This reflected consciousness of the aims of the terrorists to destabilize Kuwait and force the government to make concessions in internal and foreign policy.

The official investigation of the explosions has not resulted in identifying the perpetrators or the parties behind these agents. Kuwaiti political leaders and local journalists have hinted that the source of these terrorist actions lies no further than neighboring countries and other Arab countries in the region. There are a number of regional capitals that have an interest in destabilizing Kuwait, since Kuwait has taken a non-aligned position toward struggles between the ruling regimes in the area. Kuwait has taken a positive stand in regards to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question. This stand contradicts with the interests of many local and international forces that seek to place the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian struggle within the framework of US and Israeli schemes.

There is no specific evidence to reveal the guilty parties. But in searching for the forces behind the recent terrorist action and the ones which preceded it, we must begin with the question of who has direct or indirect interests in such acts. There are many forces that have an interest in destabilizing Kuwait and turning it away from its current political line.

Saudi Arabia has repeatedly pressured Kuwait to adhere to Saudi regional and international policies. Saudi Arabia is one of the possible criminals. Saudi Arabia would like to liquidate the little democracy that exists in Kuwait. Saudi Arabia wants to terminate Kuwaiti opposition to the GCC Joint Security Pact.

The two sides in the Iran-Iraq war are also possible criminals. Iran and Iraq both seek Kuwaiti alignment with their respective sides in the Gulf war. Kuwait has been threatened by both sides for the past five years. Iraqi and Iranian security networks have instigated many security incidents in Kuwait.

In regards to the most recent explosions, it is possible to say that it is not just the regimes in the immediate vicinity of the Kuwaiti borders who have been harmed by Kuwaiti foreign policy. There are other possible criminals.

After the attempt to assassinate the Emir of Kuwait, parliament member Ahmed Rabai stated in *al Watan* newspaper that official investigations of terrorist acts committed in Kuwait rarely identify the real criminals or the parties that back them and finance them. The Kuwaiti government usually closes the file without declaring the results of these investigations publicly so that Kuwaiti relations with neighboring countries will not be exposed to danger and so that retaliatory acts by neighboring countries will be avoided. Rabai has called upon government institutions to dispense with their fear. He has declared that the present government policy will only lead to encouragement of the terrorists and the parties who stand behind them to commit even more criminal acts against the Kuwaiti regime and the Kuwaiti people.

Kuwait will continue to suffer from «brotherly» terror for a long time to come unless the words of the Kuwaiti member of parliament find their echo in official Kuwaiti institutions. ●

World Youth Festival in Moscow

For the week of July 27th-August 3rd, youth from over 150 countries converged in Moscow for the 12th World Festival of Youth and Students. The events of the festival, and the prevailing spirit of internationalism, gave real human and political meaning to the slogan: «For anti-imperialist solidarity, peace and friendship.»

The festival opened with a rousing ceremony in Moscow's stadium. There were athletic events and dramatizations of anti-war and anti-fascist themes. All participants in the festival joined together in a tremendous march, to be welcomed by the Soviet audience who applauded and released swarms of balloons in the five festival colors - red,blue, yellow, pink and green - representing the five continents. Special enthusiasm was accorded the Nicaraguan delegation, with the audience and other marchers breaking into a united cry of «Nicaragua yes, Yankee no.» Here as throughout the festival, the aspirations of youth for a world of peace and solidarity between peoples, were readily apparent. As one of the Palestinian participants remarked afterwards, «One really felt a part of a new generation that wants peace, that opposes imperialism's war drive.»

Thereafter began a broad spectrum of political and cultural events. There were sports, arts, music and dancing. There were performances by folklore groups from all over the world. There were thorough and intense discussions and exchange of ideas organized through discussion centers. Among the main political themes dealt with were disarmament, the struggle for peace and against nuclear war, and the national liberation movements with discussions focusing on specific struggles in the world. In the anti-war discussions, the vast majority of speakers voiced the opposition of youth to imperialism's warmongering and nuclear race led by the US and most recently escalated with the Star Wars project. Delegates could sign up to speak at the discussion center of their choice with the result that the concerns of youth and popular struggles all over the world were dealt with at length, providing a firm base for strengthening international solidarity.

Participating in the festival were two Palestinian delegations, one affiliated to the Tunis headquarters, and the other affiliated to the Palestine National Salvation Front. PNSF delegates were active in the discussion centers, especially on the anti-war theme, emphasizing how imperialism has encouraged 'Israel' to launch four major wars against the Palestinian and Arab people, to enforce its hegemony.

For the great success of this international youth festival, for its spirit of internationalism and solidarity, a special vote of thanks goes to the Soviet leadership and people. Their great organizing capacity was an essential factor in gathering so many people and different activities into one powerful, cohesive manifestation. An important experience for the participants was not only the opportunity to meet each other, but to meet the Soviet people who were overwhelming in their display of internationalism and hospitality. ●

Who Benefitted from the TWA Highjacking?

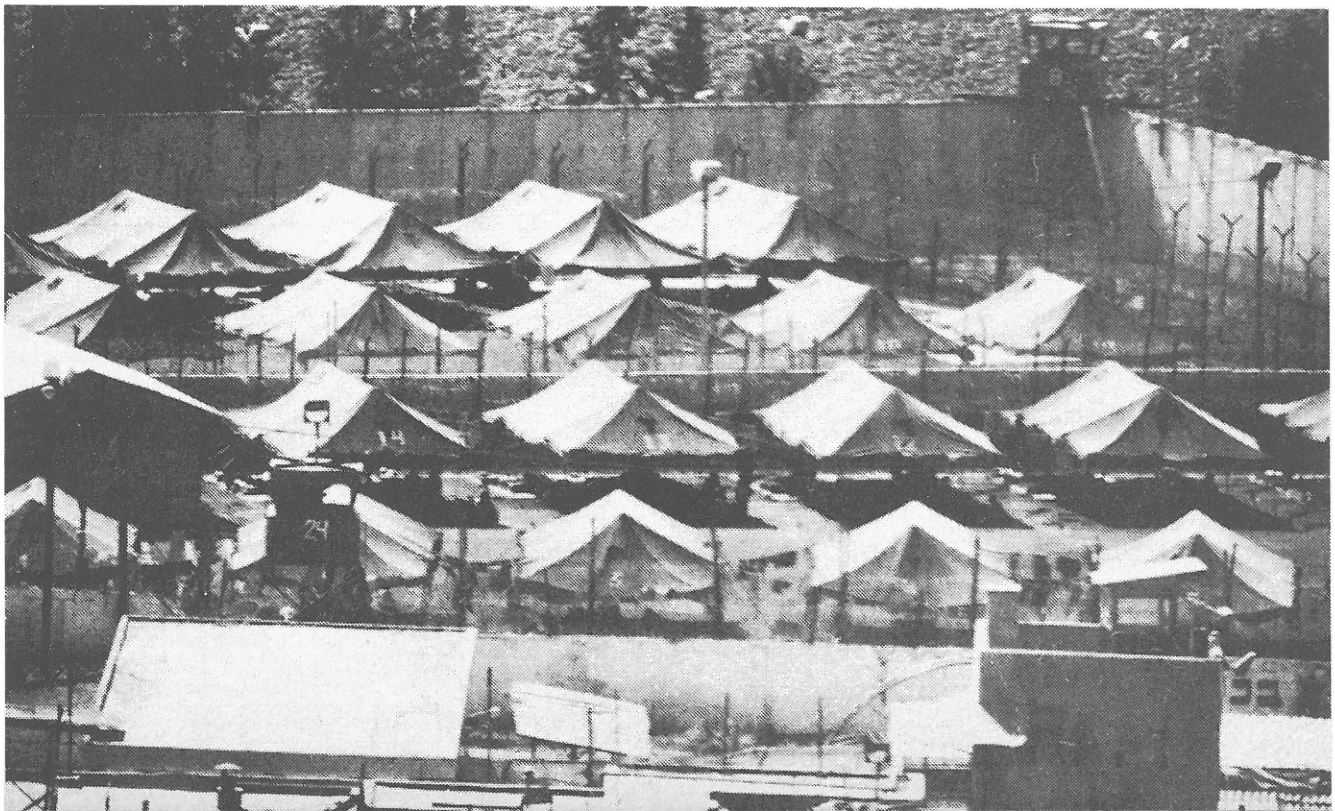
The mid-June highjacking of an American civil aircraft coincided with serious developments in Lebanon and internationally. In Lebanon, the highjacking occurred at a critical time, diverting the attention of the local and international media from the massacres being perpetrated by the Amal movement against Palestinians in the Beirut camps. In the international arena, the Reagan Administration, left out in the cold since the May 17th accord was abrogated, grabbed the highjacking as a badly needed pretext for resuming interference in Lebanese affairs. Reagan also used the incident to intensify his campaign against communism and national liberation movements around the world.

The story began when a group of armed youth, believed to be followers of Hezballah (Party of God), highjacked the TWA plane after it took off from Athens airport. Following a trip between several airports, the TWA winded up in Beirut airport which was under the control of the Amal movement. Initially the highjackers put forward a long list of demands including the release of the 750 Lebanese citizens abducted to 'Israel' by the occupation troops; full and unconditional withdrawal of all Israeli invasion forces from all Lebanese territory; the withdrawal of Lahd's puppet forces from Lebanese territory. The immediate objectives were far more than the release of the Lebanese detained in Atlit prison in 'Israel'. The demands amounted to a political manifesto addressed to international public opinion, focusing on the atrocities committed in Lebanon by 'Israel' and made possible by the strategic alliance between the USA and 'Israel'. The message was that the US was held responsible for all the crimes and terrorist acts committed in the area.

The operation takes a sharp turn

At the time, the Amal movement was bogged down in its war on the Palestinians. In order to divert attention from the besieged camps, Amal adopted the demands of the highjackers as soon as the TWA touched down on the Beirut runways. Thus, it seemed to some that Amal was undertaking a paramount decision to confront 'Israel' and the USA. Yet Amal's real motive soon became clear: After three days of psyching up public opinion and refocusing attention, Amal started to curtail the demands to be met for the release of the American hostages on board the plane. All the demands were dropped but one: the release of the Lebanese jailed in

Atlit prison in Israel where the Zionists have held Palestinian and Lebanese detainees illegally tranferred from Lebanon.



Atlit. In the end, Amal was prepared to release the hostages if only Reagan would promise to see to it that the Lebanese detainees would be released, and refrain from taking retaliatory action.

Of course, it was very easy for Reagan to give non-binding promises. He was released from the dilemma of having to make concrete concessions to the highjackers, or running the risk of ordering military action of unknown consequences (though such an operation was indeed prepared for). Thus Reagan was able to turn the highjacking to his advantage, in contrast to the ordeal of the former US President Carter when Iranian students seized the US embassy in Teheran in 1979. At that time, Carter embarked on an abortive military operation to rescue American hostages. Ultimately he had to yield to the demands of the Iran students, an event that cost him his presidency in the ensuing elections.

Reagan expands on the incident

Not only did Reagan reap the benefits of Amal's having taken control of the highjacked airplane, by gaining the hostages' release in return for a promise. He also capitalized on the incident to realize an aim he had failed to achieve over the past two years: Punishing the Lebanese people and nationalist forces for resisting the May 17th accord; the invasion of Israeli, US and NATO forces; and the imposition of Camp David via Lebanon. This was especially bitter for the Reagan Administration which had planned for Lebanon becoming a NATO base, and possible site for the Rapid Deployment Forces. Thus, Reagan was quick to begin a campaign to halt traffic to Beirut's airport and stop Lebanese flights from landing in the US. He proceeded to threaten action to hit the «sources of terror».US imperialism's «anti-terrorist» campaign was refueled with the folowing aims:

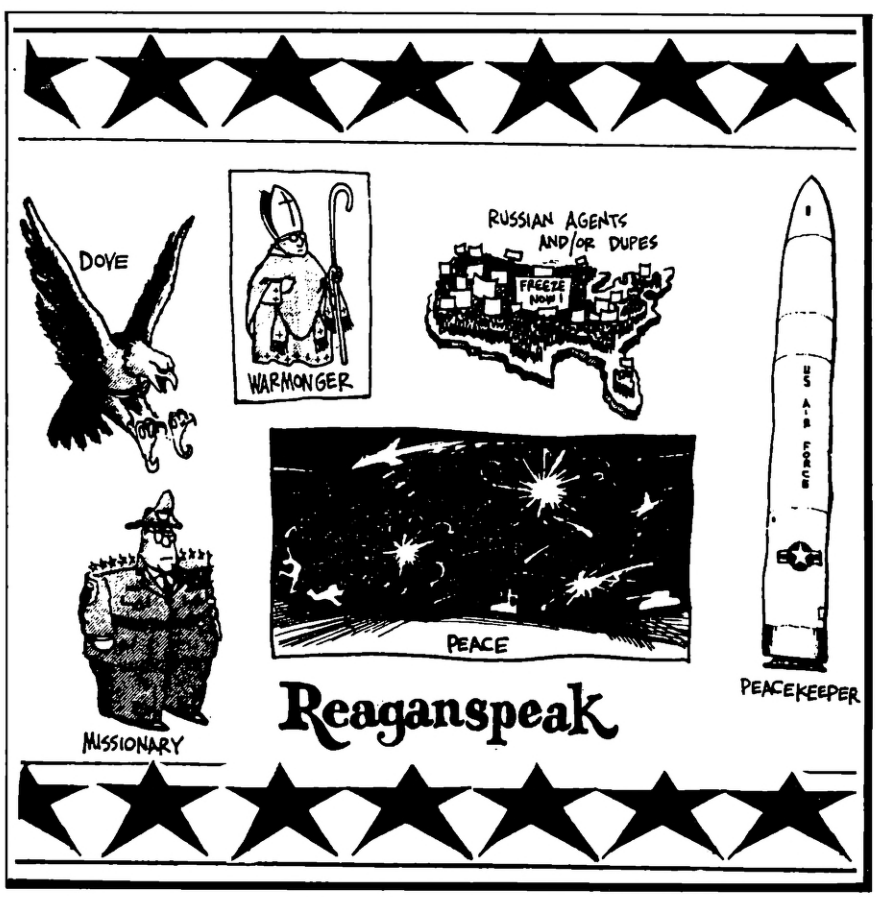
1. Preparing to deliver a deadly blow to the Arab liberation movement, especially the Palestinian revolution, and to increase pressure on the nationalist regimes that are hostile to the US and 'Israel'. Such preparations are not restricted to the Middle East, but are directed against anti-imperialist forces and countries that «harbor and support terrorists». New «arguments» were produced to justify contemplated military operations against the people of El Salvador, Nicaragua, etc. Reagan's accusing finger extends farther, with insinuations that the Soviet Union and other socialist countries also have a hand in «terror». When Reagan speaks of eradicating the roots of «terror», he is ultimately alluding to his aggressive aims against the socialist community.

2. Rallying domestic support for Reagan's aggressive policies which have come under broad criticism from various interest groups and the American people in general. A recent opinion poll had shown that a high percentage of the American people are not satisfied with Reagan's foreign policy; 42% of those interviewed favored reduction of aid to 'Israel'. The campaign around the highjacking was used to alleviate this situation. Robert Hunter, member of the Georgetown Institute for Strategic and International Studies published an article on the highjacking in which he evaluated that Reagan was the greatest beneficiary because within 17 days he succeeded in arousing the American people's maximum nationalist and chauvinist feelings.

3. By concentrating on the highjacking, the Reagan Administration managed to close ranks with its Western allies. Reagan worked hard to convince them that this and other «terrorism» is directed not only against the US, but against what he calls the «free world». This is significant in the context of the prevailing crisis in the Western alliance. This crisis was clearly manifest at the last meeting of European Common Market countries held in Milan, Italy. This meeting turned down Reagan's «Star Wars» in favor of France's Eureka project for European armament. The meeting also adopted the West German-French project for establishing a European confederation. Washington fears that this project could lessen Western Europe's dependence on US foreign policy and lead to better understanding between Western and Eastern Europe.

The real source of terror

Although Reagan managed to reap the fruits of the TWA highjacking, this is not enough to erase from history and mankind's collective memory the long record of US crimes: miltary invasions, atrocities, instigating reactionary coups and supporting the most repressive regimes around the world - in short, state terrorism at its ultimate. This record includes the US being the first and only state to drop the atomic bomb (Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945), invading Vietnam and Grenada, and making possible the continuation of apartheid and Zionism's colonization of Palestine. ●



UN World Conference on Women

Representatives from 160 countries convened in Nairobi, Kenya, from July 15th until 26th, to participate in the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. The conference concluded by ratifying a 366 paragraph document entitled «Forward-looking Strategies of Implementation for the Advancement of Women for the Period up to the Year 2000, and Concrete Measures to Overcome Obstacles to the Achievement of the Goals and Objectives of the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, and the Subtheme: Employment, Health and Education, Bearing in Mind the International Development Strategy for the Third UN Development Decade and the Establishment of a New International Economic Order.»

As reflected in this title, the themes of the Nairobi conference, like the two previous international women's conferences in Mexico City, 1975, and Copenhagen, 1980, reflect the concerns of the majority of women in the world. These themes put the question of women's oppression in its proper political, economic and social context, evaluating it in terms of the effects of economic exploitation, colonial and neo-colonial domination, and racism. Specific paragraphs of the «Forward-looking Strategies» document deal with the problems of women in detention, refugee women and children, migrant women,women and children under apartheid, Palestinian women and children and a multitude of other specific problems.

What distinguished the Nairobi conference from the ones of Mexico City and Copenhagen, was that the pro-imperialist and reactionary forces were better organized this time. Led by the daughter of Reagan, they orchestrated a concerted campaign to «depoliticize» the conference, i.e. to have it abstain from dealing with women's oppression in a social and political context and thus avoid criticism of the policies of the US and its reactionary allies.

Overall this campaign did not succeed. Progressive delegations from socialist countries, developing countries and liberation movements persistently linked women's oppression with its deeper causes. There was much criticism of the US's aggressive policies, most recently affirmed in the Star Wars project, which is a real threat to women's concern and need for peace. Many delegates stressed that women's advancement is retarded by the policies of reactionary dictatorships which have US government support. Heavy criticism was directed against the apartheid regime in South Africa and Zionism's depriving the Palestinian people of their rights.

On one point, the reactionary forces did score a formal victory. The conference delegates had decided that the final document should be ratified unanimously rather than by majority rule as at the previous conferences. Thus the US was able to exercise a veto over the entire document by insisting that the mention of Zionism be deleted from paragraph 95 which lists the obstacles to achieving equality, peace and development.

There was heated debate on this deletion with many progressive forces having voiced their condemnation of Zionism. Yet in the end, it was agreed to acquiesce on this point in order to attain unanimous approval of the document as a whole. The Zionists presented this as a big victory, but in fact it is only a formal one. The majority of delegates, like the peoples and progressive forces around the world,have condemned Zionism and will continue to do so, despite its being removed from this particular document. ●

Palestinian Women's Role at the Conference

As part of the UN World Conference on Women held in Nairobi, Kenya in July, women from all over the world gathered from July 10-19 for a pre-conference forum. Among those attending were women from national liberation movements and socialist countries. The UN estimated that 11-13,000 people participated in the week of non-official proceedings. «Democratic Palestine» interviewed one of the women from the Palestinian delegation.

What role did Palestinian women play in the pre-conference forum?

Our Palestinian delegation was concerned with issues dealing with Palestine, the question of national liberation movements and overall Arab issues. We attempted to attend as many workshops as possible and to demonstrate our presence. There were over 140 workshops a day and obviously we were not able to cover them all. In spite of the pressure from Zionist groups, it was interesting for us to find that the workshops were generally in favour of socialist countries and progressive forces as a whole.It was clear that the Zionists wanted to pose the question of peace merely as a personal issue without dealing with the role of the state and the settler-colonial aspects of 'Israel'. Most people were fed up with the Zionist propaganda and we felt that we gained new supporters. In the workshops, many people spoke positively on the question of Palestine - from the human rights perspective, or about Israel's relationship to the South African apartheid regime, or from other perspectives; it was all connected together. The most well-attended workshops dealt with Palestine, the Arab world as a whole, Central America, Nicaragua and Southern Africa.

For our part, four Palestinian women who had been released in recent prisoner exchanges spoke in workshops, explaining their experiences as Palestinian women in prison

and about the Israeli practices in the prisons. There were two workshops on Lebanese women, which also tied into the question of Palestinian women and the whole question of the struggle against Israeli occupation.

When you talked with other women delegates, what was the most important thing you stressed about Palestinian women?

Our most important task, as well as that for other liberation movements, was to fight the US plan to depoliticize the conference. When we dealt with our liberation struggle in workshops, it was important for us to point out that we as women cannot isolate our struggle from the national struggle. We said that we could not discuss the question of women without discussing the whole question of national oppression. Our main battle is in the occupied territories. Our dispersal throughout the Arab world is a result of the occupation. We compared notes with other women involved in liberation struggles, and we showed our solidarity with them. We also wanted to teach women something more about our struggle since this was the first international women's conference since the war in Lebanon in 1982. We really felt strength from comparing notes with other women on the details of their struggle and how they fight their enemies. We felt a real boost.

We told people about the effects of the war in Lebanon on Palestinian women and children. There were terrible losses for mothers, sisters and all family members. We talked about the role of Palestinian women in the war - how they participated socially in preparing meals for the fighters, organizing committees for missing persons, making links between family members, trying to relocate people whose homes were destroyed, and how many women participated in the fighting itself. We talked about the political-organizational work of Palestinian women during the war. We talked about women who were kidnapped by the Phalange and were raped and tortured, or captured by the Israelis. We dealt with how women reorganized themselves after the war by opening schools and day-care centers for children or by just carrying on with the tasks of creating a new base for existence.

Did you have the opportunity to speak with women from other liberation movements about common problems you face as women in a national liberation struggle?

With the African National Congress we discussed how you manage as women within a national liberation movement to achieve a political-fighter role for women. We face this problem. We live in a situation where we are often separated from the extended family, where childcare is a problem and you can't just throw your kids on your mother or mother-in-law's lap. They have similar problems but less than ours, because they are more established than we are. The ANC has kindergartens that are open all day long. On their days off, they don't stop the kindergartens; the staff still works. They have revolutionary schools for the children and they organize trips. It really alleviates a lot of burdens for the mother and also brings up the children in a way in which they develop socially critical opinions. We are not able to do that yet because of the difficult conditions in which we live.

In your discussions with members of other liberation movements, did you find that the question of women's social status within transforming societies was being resolved?

We all still suffer from some form of oppressive discrimination. We all expressed that. This is a historical condition which will be difficult to eliminate even after the establishment of a socialist state and the resulting resocialization. It would be unnatural to be living in our difficult social situation and not to

have these contradictions. The pressure of the general situation creates pressure on you. We have to put the problems in a political context and distinguish the main contradictions and realize that this is a process that we have to struggle with. The male attitude within the movement is much better than the one outside it.

What did you feel was the main accomplishment of Palestinian women at the conference? ▶

We were able to educate people about Zionist propaganda and we were able to explain the difference between Judaism and Zionism. The comparison between our struggle and other struggles was always important for us. On the Palestinian level, despite current political differences, the Palestinian women at the conference were able to work together with one line. There were no conflicts among Palestinian women at all. We all gave priority to the Palestinian national question and to working together to achieve the aims of our struggle. Our very presence was important so that people who had questions about the Palestinian movement would have someone to talk to. ●

Women in Struggle

The Philippines

Palestinian women at the Nairobi Women's Conference interviewed two women from the New Communist Party of the Philippines on the historical development of their struggle, the current situation and the women's struggle. Below we print an excerpt focusing on women's mobilization:

Our first women's organization named literally «To Struggle» was established in 1971. Women first initiated activities among students in support of nationalism and democracy. Nevertheless, martial law was declared in 1972. The government banned all legal organizations including this first women's organization. It went underground and many of the women went to the countryside and led guerilla fronts. Some of them have already died. One of its chairpersons, a woman activist called Lorena Barros, headed one region and formed a unit of the New People's Army. She was killed in 1976. «To Struggle» organized peasant women in the 1970s and 1980s to support armed struggle. They formed women's peasant associations. At that time, women's issues were only studied. In the last few years,we are trying to integrate women's issues into class and national issues. There has been a need to draw the largest number of women into the struggle. To do this we have to attend to the concrete conditions of women which include their problem of oppression as women.

«To Struggle» is now in the forefront in the revolutionary participation of women. All the organizations in the various sectors have established «To Struggle» cells. The open

International Women's Day march in Manila

women's movement has seen the growth of many organizations and especially among the middle class. An umbrella was established in 1984 to join all the women's organizations. It is only a year and a half old. It is trying to bring all the women's organizations together to advance an open protest movement to carry women's issues into the movement. We are trying to study various issues of our women as a basis for a major campaign.

«To Struggle» was principally formed to advance the people's struggle for liberation and democracy in the country, and at the same time to advance women's emancipation from all forms of oppression and exploitation. But it works within the framework that Filipino women are confronted not only with women's oppression but also with national and class oppression. So we see that the general women's movement has to address these three problems. In fact, the problems of women's oppression are very much determined and influenced by the national and class problems. While the problems of male domination are universal, the existence of a semi-colonial and semi-feudal system, or the national and class problems we have, also determine the forms of oppression by which this male domination is expressed. For instance, US imperialism makes women's labor cheaper, so the division is also expressed because of a national problem. Women's political repression would basically mean that women who participate in the struggle also suffer from political repression. The regime does not distinguish between men and women opponents. So women have the same problems. Except that the military-patriarchal thinking is expressed through raping women or committing sexual abuses against women, especially in the strategic hamlet areas set up by the military.

«To Struggle» also expresses the need for mass education around women's issues and women's concrete conditions and problems in order that attitudes towards women can be changed in the process of the revolutionary transformation of the society. We are participating and want to be equal partners with the men in the struggle. But at the same time, we feel the need for the men to change their ideas towards us. Having a feudal culture, our men express the attitude of over-protectiveness. They would like to protect us from violence and harm and things like that. But we are both faced with violence. The regime does not choose whom they would kill or arrest. So we say that we need to struggle as well and we need to bring the women into the struggle. We need to confront the violence together. It is this kind of attitude that also stifles our women's participation in the struggle. For instance, in the New People's Army where women have to struggle, they have to be in the main forces - not only doing educational work and health. They want to be fighters as well. We realize that massive education has to be done while we are participating in the struggle. ●

ANC - South Africa

During the UN World Conference On Women, Palestinian women met with women from the African National Congress. One of the ANC women offered the following statement on their struggle:

Women have struggled very hard with education to raise their standard. Politically they have come up to the level of men. They are doing as much political work as the men are doing. In the military field, they are fighting side by side with their menfolk. Even in the home, the men have come to realize that women are equals. In that respect, I'm convinced that there is a beginning for everything, a new way for everything. A beam of light has come up. It will grow with time. There is nothing spontaneous. We were not born old. We were born as babies and we grew up to be children, young girls and boys, and we grew up to be old women, young women and men. It is a process. It cannot be spontaneous. We must not underrate the achievements that some women have scored during this past decade. Even we ourselves in the ANC have made achievements. The organization has realized the potential of women and has given us responsibility. We are doing exactly what men are doing. We are in the national executive committee; we are in the army; we are commanders; some of us are commissars. Therefore the decade has really improved the lot of women.

There are some men who are diehard traditionalists, who will not yield. But I can assure you that as time goes on, the trend will change because no country wants to see itself as the odd one out. If women are given the chance of going to school, which is the base for everything,if they achieve their education, if they qualify, and if they take their rightful places in institutions and industry - then equal justice will come automatically. We must come up from the grassroots and grow until we reach the correct state whereby we can play our role side by side with our men. That is my feeling and this is the case in the ANC. I believe that when we finally achieve our goal, the ANC will have women in goverenment, unlike other governments where women fought, struggled and did everything, but when they got home, they still went back to the kitchen. We are not going to allow that to happen.

Ghassan Kanafani

Thought-Provoking Short Stories

Ghassan Kanafani was born in Acre, northern Palestine, in 1936. In 1972, he was assassinated by Zionist intelligence agents who booby-trapped his car. In the 36 intervening years, he made an immeasurable political and cultural contribution to his people and to the world. At eighteen he joined the Arab Nationalist Movement and was later a member of the PFLP's Politbureau and founding editor of its weekly magazine «Al Hadaf». In addition to his work as a revolutionary journalist and militant, he painted and wrote plays, novels and short stories.

Ghassan's literary works cannot ultimately be separated from his prolific political writings and revolutionary activities. All were motivated and bound by the idea of «All facts to the masses» which became the slogan of *Al Hadaf*. All are the result of commitment to the Palestinian cause and more broadly to truth, justice and humanity. On the other hand, Ghassan's literary works are not mere reflections of political points. His stories are not obviously propagandistic, but they are deeply revolutionary in that they provoke the reader to think, question and criticize.

The short stories of Ghassan examine the human feelings and behaviour of the characters involved in a sensitive, probing style. He describes reality in meticulous detail. He juxtaposes the past and the present, or the experiences of different characters, to create powerful impressions and subtle messages. In this way Kanafani conveys the basic reality of the Palestinian experience - its tragedy, its complexity, its potential for creating new people who learn to think, to discover what they want, and how to change their situation. There are many examples: In «Um Saad» a middle aged woman in a refugee camp tells about her life and thoughts, chiefly through her fears and hopes for the son who has become a freedom fighter. In «Men in the Sun» we follow the journey, and learn the fate, of three Palestinian men who set out across the desert with their humble means, to seek a better fortune in the Gulf countries. In «All That is Left for You» one reads of Hamid who leaves the occupied Gaza Strip in shame after having married off his sister Miriam, already pregnant, to an already married man who has moreover shown readiness to cooperate with the occupiers. Hamid intends to cross South Palestine to Jordan, to find his mother from whom the children were separated in the turmoil fleeing the Zionist assault on Jaffa. In the desert, he meets instead the enemy - an Israeli soldier who has wandered away from his post. Some symbolism is employed but even greater questions are posed. Is Palestine like Miriam, whom Hamid also cared for but could not protect? Or is Palestine the mother whom Hamid counts on to resolve all their problems, but whom he has not reached when the story ends?

Rather than giving any pat answers in the ending of the stories, Kanafani's style of writing subtly raises questions concerning how people react to their situation. He gives a wealth of facts and impressions and implicitly challenges the reader to think, to seek new means for understanding reality in order to change it, in order to struggle for justice.

«Return to Haifa»

One of Kanafani's stories that best exemplifies these qualities, but unfortunately has not been translated to English, is «Return to Haifa». It centers on Sayed and his wife Safiya who return to see their home in Haifa after the 1967 war when the Israelis began to allow

such visits. Though they dare not speak of it, what they both anticipate is finding their son, Khaldoun, who was only five months old on April 21st, 1948, when Zionist bombardment drove the Palestinians of Haifa to the seaside, from where they were evacuated in boats.

Now Sayed and Safiya meet their son as a young man named Dov, clad in the uniform of an Israeli reserve soldier. They meet his adoptive mother, a Polish Jewess, and learn that his adoptive father died fighting in the Sinai in 1956. The tragic irony of the situation is reinforced as Kanafani flashes back to the past of all the characters.

We learn how the young wife, Safiya, left her son for a few minutes, she thought, when the artillery began, to search for Sayed. When they finally found each other, they were caught in the throng of refugees, mercilessly driven toward the harbour with no physical possibility of returning to find their son. We learn as well how Sayed, in the first years of their exile from Haifa, tried many times to return to search for Khaldoun, but was always prevented.

The story flashes back to how Efrat and Miriam, the adoptive parents, arrived in Palestine, fleeing fascism in Europe, but with little idea of what they were coming to. Soon after their arrival, Miriam saw Zionist soldiers throwing the blood-covered body of a child on a wagon «like it was a stick of firewood.» She knew immediately that it was an Arab child, for as she told Efrat, «If it had been Jewish they certainly wouldn't have done like that.» For Miriam this evokes memories of her younger brother being killed by the Nazis as he approached her house to tell that their father had been taken to Auschwitz, where he later died. From the time she saw the Arab child being loaded on the truck, the experience of settling in Palestine soured for Miriam. For that reason, Efrat was overjoyed that they could adopt the small child who had been «abandoned» in the house assigned to them by the Jewish agency.

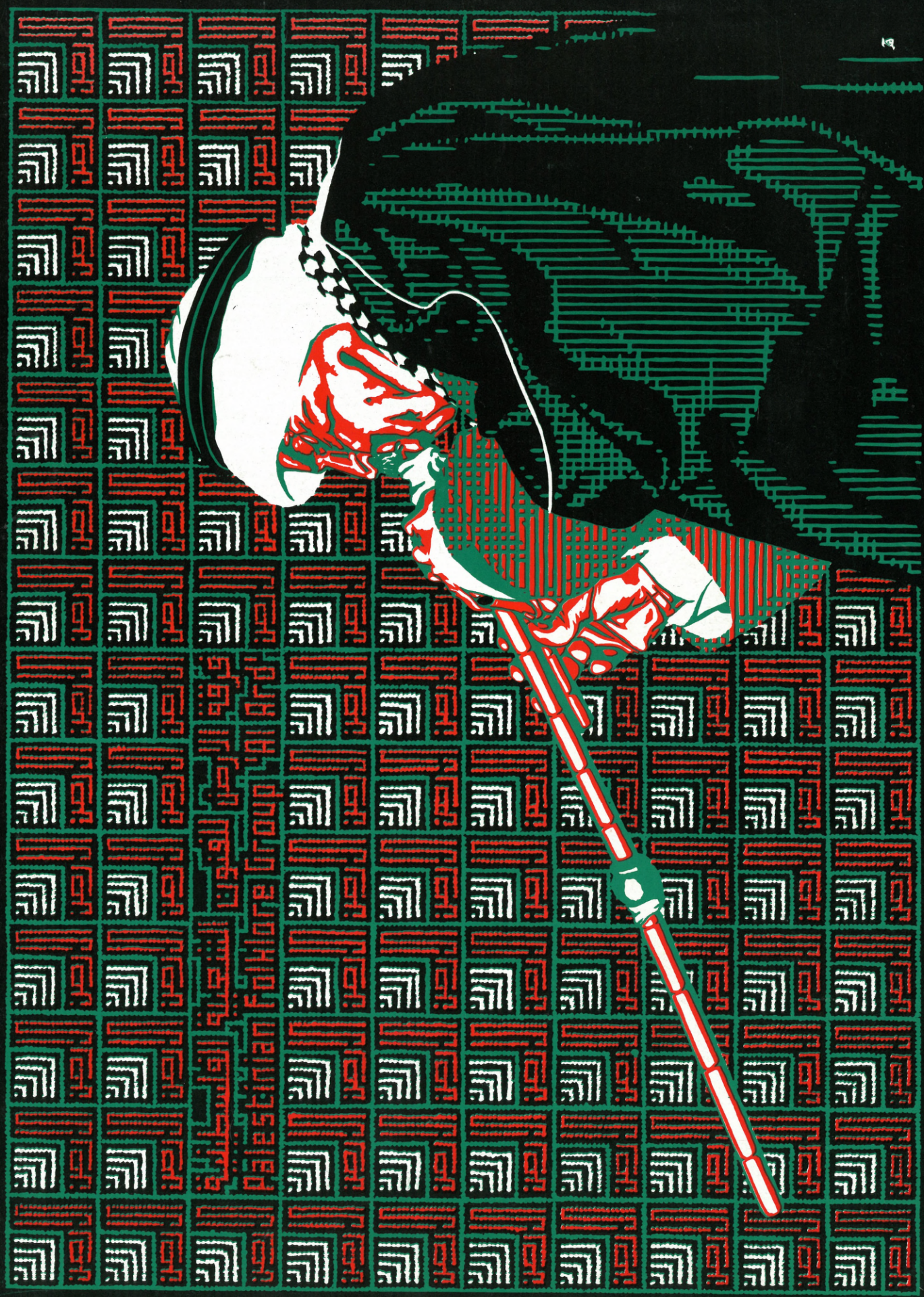
Sayed and Safiya are confronted with the reality that their son is not their son. Dov has been raised as a Jew who identifies the Arabs as enemies. His loyalties are with the parents who raised him and to the Zionist state.

From this discovery stem a multitude of new thoughts. «Sayed felt that the walls within which he had lived for twenty years had collapsed, and that he was now able to see things more clearly.» He begins to question if the homeland, Palestine, is the past which he and his wife had stored up in their memories, epitomized in the lost son. Or isn't Palestine the future, and the future of their other son, Khaled, who wants to join the freedom fighters?

Ghassan's voice cannot be silenced

Though descriptive in style, «Return to Haifa» is in essence thought-provoking. To the international audience, it conveys a broader understanding of the nuances of the Palestinian dilemma and cause. To Palestinians, it is a point of departure for examining their own thinking, commitment and means of struggle.

Kanafani's political writings had the same effect on a different level: He was highly articulate in conveying the progressive essence of the Palestinian cause to people around the world. In the Palestinian and Arab arena, he was a persuasive mobilizer. For this dual ability, the Zionists sought to silence his voice once and for all. Yet though they succeeded in their physical liquidation, they failed to quell Ghassan's political and cultural expressiveness. Ghassan Kanafani, his voice, his writings and his example, remain with us as an inspiration and integral part of the ongoing liberation struggle.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